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Family Simulations in Counsellor Development

BY

B. Annette Krest

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

Master of Education

IN

Counselling Psychology

Department of Educational Psychology

Edmonton, Alberta

Fall, 1993

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Dr. J. Blakey

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Date: October 1, 1993

Abstract

Counsellors-in-training from a Family Counselling graduate course who simulated families in therapy were interviewed about their role-playing experiences as a way of exploring the simulation exercise from students' perspectives and discovering how the simulation exercise contributed to students' personal and/or professional development. Results from a qualitative analysis of data were organized into a five-part description of the simulation exercise which includes the selection of roles; type of roles taken; factors affecting the experience; a description of the role-playing exercise from students' perspectives; and impact from the experience. Results indicate that several different, often conflicting factors influence students to choose certain roles; roles vary in degree of familiarity which in turn affects the quality of students' role-playing experiences; and several factors both outside and inside students' control affect the quality of their experiences. Results also show that twenty-three of the twenty-six students interviewed were personally and/or professionally impacted by their role-playing experiences.

Acknowledgements

I've heard it said that no great endeavor is ever accomplished alone. The experience of writing this thesis has certainly shown me the truth of that statement. I could not have accomplished this project without the cooperation and support of several people. I am grateful to those students who volunteered to participate in my study by making the time and expending the effort to tell me about their role-playing experiences.

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Table of Contents

Chapter		Page
I	Introduction	1
	A. Purpose of the Study	1
	B. Background Information	1
II	Methodology	4
	A. The Choice of Approach	4
	B. The Study Design	4
	C. Data Collection	5
	D. The Participants	6
	E. Data Analysis	6
	F. Ethical Considerations	7
	G. Researcher's Perspective	8
III	Findings	10
	A. Choosing a Role	10
	1. Students' Goals	10
	2. Perceived Risk	14
	3. Intervening Conditions	15
	B. Type of Role Taken	19
	1. Unfamiliarity	19
	2. Familiarity	20
	C. Intervening Conditions	22
	1. Extrinsic Factors	22
	2. Individual Biography	26
	3. Perceived Riskiness	31
	4. Perceived Expectations	32

D. The Role-playing Experience 33

1. Emergence of Self 34
2. Immersion 38
3. Realness 41
4. Emotionality 44
5. Comfort Level 44
6. Naturalness 48
7. Reminiscence 48
8. Compensating 49
9. Experimenting 50
10. Practising 50
11. Orchestrating 51
12. Managing Risk 52
13. Reflection 52

E. Impact From the Experience 54

1. Personal Impact 57

a) Affect on Self 57
b) Affect on Relationships 59

2. Professional Impact 60

a) Affect on Counselling 60
b) Confirming Theory 62
c) Vicarious Learning 62

IV Discussion and Literature Review 65

A. The Selection of Roles 65
B. Intervening Conditions 65
C. The Role-playing Experience 66
D. Impact From the Experience 68

V Conclusions and Recommendations 71

A. Summary of the Study 71
B. Limitations of the Study 77
C. Recommendations 78
D. Future Research 80

References 81

Appendix A: Interview Guide 84

Appendix B: Consent Form 85

List of Figures

Figure	Description	Page
1	Interwoven Themes of Impactful Experiences	55
2	Impact From the Experience	64

Chapter One

Introduction

A. Purpose of the Study

My purpose in conducting this study was to explore the experiences of counsellors-in-training who participated in a simulation exercise in a Family Counselling graduate course. The exercise involved counsellors-in-training simulating families in therapy with the aim of teaching counsellors-in-training about family dynamics and family therapy.

As a participant in the simulation exercise, I was struck by what I was experiencing as I role-played. In an academic environment where my expectations were for objective and rational learnings uncomplicated by my own personal baggage, I was taken by surprise when what I experienced was instead quite personal and emotional. From my own experience while role-playing and from observing the seemingly emotional and personal reactions of my classmates while they role-played, I began wondering what types of learning students were taking away from the role-playing exercise. Based on my own experience, my hunch was that other students were learning not only about academic concepts but also about themselves as persons. My hope was that by studying the role-playing exercise from the student`s perspective, I would discover how the simulation exercise impacted counsellors-in-training, particularly how aspects of the simulation exercise may have contributed to students' personal and/or professional development.

B. Background Information

In most schools, colleges, universities, and training establishments, educating students is still accomplished largely by didactic methods whereby the tutor tries to impart knowledge and skills to students by using conventional tools such as lectures, textbooks, films, discussions, and writing assignments. Didacticism continues to be a stronghold in the educational process because it fits well into the existing institutional framework of most schools; it is easier for educators to designate objectives, design teaching programs, and examine students; the tutor has more control over what students are to learn; and teachers who were also educated in the didactic tradition are often most familiar and comfortable with using didactic methods to teach (Dennison & Kirk, 1990).

Although the most utilized method of educating has been and continues to be didactic, in the 1960's a movement away from didactic forms of instruction and towards

experiential learning as an approach to education occurred (van Ments, 1989; Weil & McGill, 1989; MeGarry, 1977). In contrast to didactic methods, the experiential approach emphasizes learning through actually experiencing segments of the concepts or skills being taught. Experiential learning exercises are designed to generate live data and experiences that can be used to teach concepts, ideas, and to instigate behavioral insights (Warrick, Hunsaker, Phillip, Cook, & Altman, 1979). The shift in focus in education from didactic to experiential teaching techniques was a result of a discovery made by psychologists and educational researchers that lecturing was not as effective as had been assumed but that experience was an essential although neglected factor in learning. Thus, as the focus in adult education shifted to linking learning more effectively to action, many teachers began re-examining their methods and experimenting with new methods of educating. Utilizing simulations as an educational tool was part of the thrust towards incorporating the vital missing experiential component into the learning process (Oxenham, 1982).

In comparison to the developments occurring in the general field of education during the 1960's, developments in the field of counsellor education appear to have been relatively progressive in that many teachers involved in educating counsellors-in-training were already in the 1950's re-examining their methods and experimenting with using role-playing as an experiential means of educating counsellors-in-training (Schwebel, 1953). However, the shift in the 1960's towards using more experientially-based teaching methods did not leave the field of counsellor education unaffected. Up until the advent of simulations as an experiential method of education, little research on training counsellors and clinicians had been done (Ford, 1979). The divergence from the orthodox didactic methods of education stimulated research on simulations in the field of counsellor education.

Much of the research that has been done on simulations has either focussed on using empirical methods to evaluate the effects of simulations or on reporting about particular simulation games in particular situations (van Ments, 1985). MeGarry (1977) concludes that enough research into the effects of simulations and games has been accumulated to indicate that they are potentially very powerful tools to educate students. For example, findings from Panther's (1971) empirical study support the use of simulation involving role-playing as an effective training procedure for preparing elementary school counsellors to consult with teachers. Similarly, results from the empirical study done by Azy, Engel, Katzir, and Fisher (1987) provide evidence for the efficacy of using a training simulation game in which students role-played clients as a way of improving the students' empathetic understanding of clients. Another study by Teevan and Gabel (1978) which involved comparing the efficacy of didactic and experiential training methods found that those paraprofessional students who were trained with modelling and role-playing techniques had significantly better counselling skills compared to those students who were trained with lectures and discussions. Raasoch and Laqueur's (1979) paper also advocates the use of simulated workshops as an effective way of teaching multiple family therapy.

Reports of particular simulations used in particular contexts include papers written which describe training methods which incorporate experiential learning techniques in counsellor education. For example, a paper by Bardill (1976) discusses the use of the simulated family in teaching concepts and principles of family therapy and a paper by Weingarten (1979) describes an academic course in family therapy which combines didactic and experiential teaching techniques. Other papers which describe the use of simulation exercises as a way of educating counsellors-in-training are a paper by Ferber and Mendelsohn (1969) which describes a training program in clinical psychiatric units which utilizes role-playing and a paper by Constantine (1976) which describes a family therapy training program at Boston State Hospital which integrates experiential and cognitive methods of learning. The Family Therapy Training Program at Boston State Hospital is based on the premise that to develop competent, caring, and creative therapists, program training needs to primarly develop the "persons" of trainees. In other words, instead of having trainees unquestioningly accept the ideas and techniques of the experts, training involves integrating trainees' life experiences, ways of thinking and being with theoretical constructs. For example, how a trainee perceives his/her own family and life seems to be part of how he/she looks at all families and life contexts and influences the preferences trainees have for certain theories. Therefore, by having trainees first tap into, explore, and discover their own beginning constructs and theories derived from their own life experience and personal world views as a base for learning, "learning from the inside out" is promoted (Duhl, 1983).

Although research has included descriptions of simulations as methods of counsellor education and has generally concluded that experientially-based education is a valuable adjunct to didactic teaching techniques, further improvement and fuller substantiation and documentation of simulation exercises is still required so that they can be most effectively used within the educational process (van Ments & Hearnden, 1985). For example, there is a dearth of research devoted to focussing on what mechanisms of simulation exercises make them effective. As well, there is a dearth of research in the family therapy literature which describes the experience of individuals in simulated families (Weingarten, 1979). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to add to the existing literature on counsellor education in a new way by focussing on what students experience in a simulation exercise in hopes of revealing those mechanisms of the simulations which make them effective as learning tools.

Chaper Two

Methodology

A. The Choice of Approach

I chose to use a qualitative research design for two main reasons. First, since little research has been devoted to analyzing how participants experience simulations, my study was in essence exploratory and aimed at providing the depth and detail of information about simulations which seems to be lacking in the family therapy literature. A qualitative research design therefore seemed best suited to generating the richest description of what students experience when they participate in simulations.

In the second place, since my study's focus was on the experience of participating in a simulation exercise from the student's frame of reference, a qualitative approach seemed to be the method of highest fidelity in that it seemed to have the most potential for tapping into and accurately recreating the student's experience of participating in a simulation.

B. The Research Design

I based the study's design on the critical incident technique delineated by Woolsey (Woolsey, 1986). While I used the critical incident technique to gather and analyze data, I also found Strauss and Corbin (1990) to be helpful in the thematic analysis of the data.

Since my initial focus was on how the role-playing experience of students in the family therapy course contributed to their personal and/or professional development, the critical incident technique seemed to be an appropriate method of gathering data. The critical incident technique is a qualitative research method which, through gathering reports from knowledgeable observers on critical incidents, provides a basis for developing criteria which contribute to a certain outcome (Woolsey, 1986).

However, after conducting only two or three indepth interviews, it became clear to me that it seemed very difficult for and irrelevant to respondents to delineate what specific incidents they felt contributed to their personal and/or professional development. Rather, it seemed more important, relevant, and immediate for them to focus on describing their role-playing experiences as wholes and to focus on those aspects which concerned them most. Since my primary intent was to illuminate the role-playing experience from the

student's perspective, I adopted a more open-ended interviewing format as a way of being as faithful as possible to the role-playing experience from the student's perspective. Extending and expanding the critical incident approach by adopting a more open-ended interviewing approach was also a reflection of my priority to allow theory to inductively develop rather than to impose unnecessary structure on the data in order to produce a preconceived and intended outcome.

In keeping with my primary priority to allow theory to be inductively developed, the design of the study, in part, diverged from conventional standards in that I chose not to conduct a review of the pertinent literature before embarking on data collection and analysis. In departing from conventional methods, my intent was to eliminate hypotheses, concepts, and preconceived notions before data collection to ensure that hypotheses and concepts would instead emerge from the data. In essence, my aim was to approach the study topic with a mind-set as unjudgemental, questionning, and curious as possible.

I have summarized the findings of the study using thematic descriptions as well as numbers and figures.

C. Data Collection

I collected data through in-depth semi-structured interviews with participants which emphasized my empathetic listening skills and allowed each participant for the most part to set the direction of the interview.

In accordance with Woolsey's (1986) suggestion that respondents may find it helpful to be oriented in regards to the content domain of the interview before being interviewed, I gave a copy of the interview guide (see Appendix A) to participants a few days before the time of the interview in order to get the participants thinking about their experiences and to give them sufficient time to prepare themselves for the interview.

I conducted interviews in the University of Alberta Education Clinic which provided facilities for videotaping interviews. Before beginning each interview, I obtained each participant's written consent to allow me to videotape his/her interview and to ultimately incorporate the information provided into a research paper. I also reviewed the focus of the interview before starting the interview to ensure that each participant fully understood the intent of the interview guide. Each interview session lasted for an average of one hour and I later transcribed each interview word for word.

While interviewing each participant, my questions essentially followed the format of the interview guide, thus allowing for comparisons of information across protocols. However, I balanced an aim for consistency with an aim for flexibility in questionning

technique by incorporating into subsequent interviews those concepts introduced by participants which seemed meaningful and potentially illuminating. Thus, as new meaningful concepts emerged in each interview and were incorporated into subsequent interviews, the direction of interviews naturally and differentially evolved. In retrospect, I approximated a constant comparative method of data collection (Stern, 1980) whereby initial data gathered guided further data collection.

Besides data collected from in-depth interviews with participants, my data consisted of memos recording my impressions, ideas, and hypotheses as they emerged throughout the research project.

D. The Participants

Twenty-seven out of a possible thirty graduate students from the University of Alberta Counselling Psychology Program who were enrolled in either an Introductory or Advanced course in Family Counselling which took place in 1991 and 1992 volunteered to be interviewed about their role-playing experiences. Since one videotape of an interview malfunctioned and therefore had to be eliminated and two students provided two interviews each as the result of having been enrolled in both the Introductory and Advanced Family Counselling courses, a total of twenty-eight interviews was used.

Twenty students were at the Masters level while eight students were at the Doctoral level. Twenty-one students were enrolled in the Introductory Family Counselling course while the remaining seven students were enrolled in the Advanced course. Seventeen participants were female and nine were male.

I contacted participants through the professor of the Family Counselling courses. During the initial contact, I explained the purpose of the study and asked each student to volunteer to be interviewed about his/her role-playing experience in a face-to-face interview of approximately one hour in length.

E. Data Analysis

As a way of ensuring the privacy of participants and maximizing my familiarity with the data, I transcribed all twenty-eight interviews word for word. I then paraphrased all transcripts on a sentence by sentence basis according to naturally occurring meaning units. In other words, I considered every single idea conveyed in each transcript as one meaning unit and subsequently paraphrased each idea. While paraphrasing, I

incorporated participants' own language as much as possible as a way of retaining as much of the original meaning intended by participants.

After I paraphrased all transcripts, I used a process of open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) whereby I assigned each paraphrase a conceptual name called a code which captured the essential meaning of each paraphrase. After I initially coded data, I subsequently re-coded data two more times in a process of continually refining data which involved comparing protocols and noting similarities and differences among the data.

Once I paraphrased and coded transcripts, I then color-coded transcripts as a means of determining which and how many protocols contributed to a particular code. I then cut the color-coded meaning units from each transcript and categorized them by placing like with like into envelopes labelled with the codes.

Next, I grouped together into a superordinate code those codes which seemed to logically fit together and to pertain to the same phenomenon. Thus, through the process of grouping codes, I put the original data back together in new ways by clustering the information together in new ways. If a code was represented by only a few protocols, I further collapsed the code into another related and more encompassing code.

Not only did the analysis of data involve the paraphrasing and coding of written transcripts but it also involved memoing whereby I continually recorded my ideas, hypotheses, and impressions during the research process. After memoing during paraphrasing and open coding, I was able to further develop my ideas and hypotheses into a more comprehensive and wholistic conceptualization of the data by linking memos.

Since my original intent was to explore how aspects of a simulation exercise may contribute to a student's personal and/or professional development, I continued on from a thematic analysis of the experience of role-playing to a qualitative analysis of the correlations among elements of the role-playing exercise and outcomes of the exercise. In other words, re-exploration of the data yielded information about what particular aspects of the role-playing experience were correlated with outcomes in which students were differentially personally and/or professionally impacted by their role-playing experiences.

F. Ethical Considerations

In accordance with ethical standards, I requested from and was granted approval by the Ethics Review Committee of the Department of Educational Psychology to carry out

the research project within guidelines which considered ethical matters of informed consent, voluntary participation, and confidentiality.

I addressed the issue of informed consent by verbally and in writing informing participants of the general purpose of the research project and their role within it. I informed participants that interviews would be videotaped with their permission and later transcribed by me. I asked participants to sign a written consent form (see Appendix B) acknowledging their full understanding and consent of research procedures.

In regards to the matter of voluntary participation, I verbally and in writing informed participants that their participation was voluntary and that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time.

Finally, in order to ensure confidentiality of information, I was the only person to observe and transcribe all videotaped interviews. After each tape was transcribed, it was immediately erased. I ensured confidentiality and anonymity by giving pseudonyms to participants and to any names participants mentioned during the interview. Furthermore, I omitted from the final research report any information that could reasonably be expected to identify participants.

G. Researcher's Perspective

My approach to this study and the findings which derived from it may be more understandable if some of my personal background and biases are discussed.

As a participant in the role-playing exercise, my own personal experience while role-playing and my assumption about the connection between my experience and other students' role-playing experiences influenced my choice of the research question. Specifically, as I role-played, the emotional intensity of my experience prompted me to consider that I may have been trying to resolve unresolved familial issues via role-playing. My hunch was that the role-playing experience was helping me to grow personally by providing me with an opportunity to work through unresolved familial issues. An ongoing assumption of mine has been that if I am experiencing something in a particular way, that probably at least one other person is also experiencing similar reactions. Thus, my own experience role-playing and my assumption about others' role-playing experiences prompted me to ask the question how the role-playing experience contributed to students' personal and/or professional development.

Not only was my choice of research question influenced by my own personal biases, but my choice of research design was influenced by who I have always tended to be as a person and who I continue to be as a counsellor-in-training. My greatest curiosity has

always been for the experiences of people and for the underlying themes which link people's experiences. Furthermore, my strengths have been my ability to form empathetic relationships with people in which people reveal their experiences to me and to understand information which is verbally expressed rather than numerically expressed. Thus, a qualitative rather than a quantitative approach naturally fit with my own personal approach to life in general and allowed me to capitalize on my interpersonal strengths.

The findings of the study may have been influenced by my choice of the participants. All participants were counsellors-in-training in the same counselling program as I was enrolled in with fourteen out of the twenty-six students having been enrolled in the same Family Counselling classes as I was. Being in the same counselling program as I was in may have influenced participants, especially those who participated in the same classes as I did, to form certain impressions of me which in turn may have influenced the quality of information they provided me during the interviewing process. My impression during the interviewing process, however, was that the vast majority of participants were remarkably open to telling me about their experiences regardless of how well they knew me.

Chapter Three

Findings

In this chapter, I include a description of the experiences of counsellors-in-training who participated in a role-playing exercise which involved simulating families in therapy. The description of students' experiences consists of a five part analysis. The analysis begins with a description of how students chose their roles, continues with a description of the roles taken by students, moves on to a description of the conditions which affected students' role-playing experiences, proceeds to an indepth description of the actual experience of role-playing, and ends with an overview of the outcomes of students' experiences.

A. Choosing a Role

Each student chose to play the role of a particular family member depending on what he/she wanted to achieve by taking that particular role and on the degree of risk he/she associated with taking such a role. Furthermore, other conditions influenced what roles some students adopted by either facilitating or constraining the choices of the students.

1. Students' Goals

Some of the students approached the process of choosing a role with purposeful goals in mind. For example, while some students wanted to avoid a certain role which engendered risk or discomfort for them, other students actively sought out a role as a way of either gaining enjoyment, novelty, or knowledge for themselves. Other students' actions in the process of choosing a role were aimed at creating a certain impression of themselves.

(a) Avoidance of a Role

In the process of choosing roles, some students were immediately cognizant that they did not want to play certain roles and actively strove to avoid assuming those roles.

> I didn't want to be Mother. No, in fact, I made every effort not to get into that role. When they selected the people that were going to play the groups, I put myself on the floor hoping that by doing that, the power would go above me. You know, that somebody else would end up Mother.

> Originally when we did our first role play and they said, "Pick a role", I was very afraid that I was going to get stuck with the father role. So I grabbed the child role right away and I said, "I'll be the kid". So I took that role (the child role) out of fear.

> I played the role of the youngest in the family. I chose not to be the eldest. I knew I didn't want to be a parent because I didn't want to parent anybody. And I didn't want to really have to be responsible or take a major part in the family. So I wanted to be the youngest.

(b) Desire For Enjoyment

Another motivation for some students taking on particular roles was their desire to create a sense of fun and playfulness during the role-playing exercise.

> I wanted to be one of the kids because I like to laugh and because it's fun. I thought it would be more fun to do that than to be a parent, I guess. I thought it would be funny. I always try to have fun with sort of whatever I'm doing.

> I chose my role as a way to have fun, I guess. Not in a harmful way. But I guess it was sort of a challenge in that I wanted to see how I could put people on their toes.

> I had to (play a role in which I could) be oppositional. It's just a way of prolonging my adolescence. It's like me going back to school. I wanted to have fun by being a kid. It's fun because I can be very spontaneous and there's no real pressure on me. I get to act out.

(c) Desire For Novelty

Some students cited as a reason for choosing a particular role their want for a role that differed either from the usual role they assume in their present families or from the role that they assumed during their childhood.

> I chose my role specifically because I thought it would be interesting to try a role other than the kind that I had as a child.

> The other woman who was in the group and I both agreed that we didn't want to play roles that we had played in our family of origin or our current family. I had been an oldest child. So I said, "Okay, I'll be the mom and you can be the child". Because I already know what it's like to be the oldest child and since I had a choice, I prefer to explore something else.

> In our (role-playing) family, everybody wanted to be what they weren't normally. One of the women didn't want to be a mother because she was already a mother. The other fellow was a father (in his real family). He didn't want to be a father (in the simulated family). So it was more of a wanting to not be what your role in your real family was.

(d) Gaining Insight

Another reason given by some students for why they adopted a specific role was that they were attempting to gain a better understanding about issues which concerned them by taking on a particular role.

> I wanted to be an adolescent or a kid so I'd get more insight into clients that were younger.

> I thought it would be really interesting to see what it would be like to be in somebody else's shoes. That was interesting to me. And I wanted to see what it would be like to be in that sector of the family.

> The other reason why I chose that role (of the single father), too, was because I had a client whose wife had just left him and he was a single parent of two young kids. I wanted to try to understand more of what his world was like having single parenthood kind of thrust upon him.

(e) Impression Management

By choosing a certain role, some students intended to either create a favorable impression of themselves or avoid an unfavorable impression.

> I didn't want to be Mother. I think I didn't want to look bitchy and aggressive and I know that if I play a role (the mother role), I'll get into it. I think I didn't want them (my classmates) to see that. I think I was a little nervous.

> I didn't want to be the mom (because) in the class that we were in, I wanted people to see me in a different light. Because it's very important to me what people think of me. I guess I wanted people to see that there is another side of me too. That I don't always have to be serious and I don't always have to be in the spotlight. That I can also be a follower.

> I didn't choose to be how I usually am which is more aggressive. I guess it's that I'm sometimes a little bit embarrassed about being that way. So I guess I didn't want that to be presented in class. I didn't want people to see me that way because I don't think it's that attractive being that way.

2. Perceived Risk

In addition to choosing particular roles in order to achieve particular goals, students were motivated to avoid certain roles which they perceived to be risky. Roles seemed to be risky if they set up the possibility of either being judged by their peers or hurting their peers' feelings.

(a) Risk of Being Judged By Peers

If in the process of choosing a role, a student felt that playing a certain role potentially involved a risk of being negatively judged by his/her peers, he/she seemed more likely to manage the risk by avoiding playing such a role or choosing a role which seemed safe.

> I didn't want to play the father role. I think I'd be more vulnerable if I had been in the father role because I am a father (in my real life) and I would feel like people would be much more critical of it. Like they might see me in the role play and think, "I mean that's how he fathers?!" That's probably how I'd explain my

> motivation for not taking it (the father role). It's more of a vulnerable role because I could be more heavily judged, I guess.

> At that point in the course, I didn't feel completely comfortable playing the role of a vulnerable, overly caring, emotionally open person. It was much safer to play a rebellious covered role. It (the role I chose) had something to do with trusting my classmates.

> Firstly, I didn't have the choice to role-play or not. And since I had no choice, then I decided, okay, I'll pick the role that is the safest. I had a fear of being judged.

(b) Fear of Hurting Others

Another source of risk which hindered students from taking on certain roles was the fear of possibly hurting their classmates' feelings.

> I was very afraid that I'd have to play that (the father role). And I wouldn't know how because the only way that I would really know how would be maybe to yell because that's what my dad (did). So I thought, there's just no way. I don't want to be yelling at all my friends here. I would never want to hurt anybody.

3. Intervening Conditions

While some students decided to obtain particular roles in order to achieve certain goals and to avoid particular roles after assessing the risk engendered by taking on such roles, the ability to adopt the roles that they wanted was either constrained or facilitated by other conditions. Conditions such as the student's drama experience, the classroom context, the student's perceived responsibility to participate in the role-playing exercise,

and other students' actions of assigning roles influenced what role the student ultimately assumed by either thwarting or facilitating the student's ability to take on the role that he/she wanted.

(a) Drama Experience

One perception among those students who mentioned their drama experience as a factor which influenced what role they chose was that their previous drama experience increased the number of choices they had for the number of roles they were capable of playing.

> The other part to this is that I'm an actress. My background is drama. So I am used to sort of getting into roles. I haven't done it for awhile but it is something that I've been in training for as well.

For some students, their previous or lack of drama experience seems to have influenced the roles they chose by influencing their expectations of what would occur during the role-playing experience.

> I've known from watching people role-playing that role-playing does bring stuff out (personal unresolved issues). I was aware because I've done drama before when I was in high school and always found that stuff does come out. I felt like I was just thrown in there (the role-playing exercise) to reveal myself and I wasn't about to do that. Since I didn't have a choice to role-play or not, I decided I'd pick the role that is the safest.

> I like role-playing. I use it in the workshops I do a lot. It's fun. It's easier to play the clients than the therapist because you can't be wrong. (As a role- playing client), you get to act out. Once before I ended up as an adolescent as well.

(b) Influence of Context

Some students' choices of what role they wanted to play were influenced by the context of the classroom situation and the students who were a part of that context.

> (The role that I would choose) would depend on who is in the group. Two women were in the group with me. I would imagine it would play out differently if it had been any other two combinations of people in class. If there would have been two males in the group, then I might have taken on a different role. If I had taken on with one of the older women, I might have taken a different role and play something else out.

> I wanted to be one of the kids. I guess back then, I knew Judy and Corey, but I guess maybe I felt more comfortable with Joan. So maybe that's why her (Joan) and I fell into that (the child roles).

> On the day in the group, I had decided that I didn't want to be that (the parent). I think that I was probably reacting to the people in the group. Just at that time, I remember feeling I was uncomfortable being in an authoritative role with those guys.

(c) Responsibility to Participate

Another condition which seemed to limit students' alternatives for what roles they could take on was students' perceptions of what roles they were expected to play. Typically, students limited their choices by typecasting themselves into roles which fit with their gender.

I don't think I quite chose (my role). I think you keep your mouth shut long enough and somebody quickly wants to be the Mom and Dad. Pushy people become the mom and dad. And so it kind of left the kid's role to me and her (female classmate). Then obviously I had to be the boy.

I wanted to take a one-down position. But when they said, "No, you have to be the mother", then I backed down and I said okay. It seemed the logical thing to do since I was the only female.

The person who played my son had played the father last year. So since I was the only other guy, I decided to play the father.

(d) Assignment of Role

While some students' choices of what roles they wanted to play were influenced by their previous drama experience, the classroom context, or their perceived responsibility to play a certain role, some students' choices were constrained when their roles were assigned to them by other students. Students were sometimes assigned their roles as as result of being typecasted by other students.

It started off with one member saying, "Well, you look like you would be the typical passive father so that's who you will be".

I picked Judy as Dad because she's so very laid back, calm, and rational. My dad was very laid back and relaxed. I thought Judy was more like a dad.

Actually, I was probably fairly directive in assessing who belonged where. I would probably mostly organize the sibling unit. One of our people in our group seemed to have kind of a

> flexible, mellow personality, more of a middle-born go either way (personality). As far as my mind was concerned, I had kind of typecasted the middle child because of (her) similarity with my sister. She was the one I put in the middle position.

> I got my role because I was quiet. I was thinking when everyone was talking about what roles they wanted. And so by the time I was ready, they had it all figured out. And they said, "You be the mother".

B. Type of Role Taken

The consequence of the interaction among such factors as students' personal goals, their risk assessments, and other conditions which either facilitated or constrained students' choices was the type of role ultimately taken on by each student. The role which each student adopted varied in degree of familiarity. While some students assumed roles which seemed unfamiliar to them, other students assumed roles which seemed familiar to them.

1. Unfamiliarity

One set of students assumed roles which were for the most part unfamiliar to them in that their roles were incongruous with their perceptions of themselves during childhood.

> I didn't like to be that overtly negative or overtly domineering or critical. I didn't like being mean to them (my role-playing siblings). I was very much opposite to that (in my family of origin). In my role in (my) family, I was much more nurturing.

> I was sort of quiet, passive, and detatched (in my role). I don't think it was that way (in my

> family of origin). Typically I'm more aggressive than assertive. At home, I always did things my way. But I certainly wasn't passive (at home).

Roles also seemed unfamiliar if they were incongruous with the student's perception of himself/herself in his/her past or present adult life.

> In the role, I was the kid who would basically thumb his nose at authority. And I've never been that kind of person. I mean I've done it privately but never actually stood up in front of whoever and said, "Take a hike." And that felt odd to set myself up in that kind of a role.

> (With my fiance's) children, I don't play the hard disciplinarian so it was a little strange and different when the role-playing family was having problems with the eldest daughter and I had to tighten up the role.

2. Familiarity

In contrast to the students who took on unfamiliar roles, another group of students adopted roles which were familiar to them. Roles seemed familiar if they were congruous with the student's perception of himself/herself in his/her family of origin.

> I was going to be the oldest (child) in this family. And then someone said, "No, I want to be the oldest. You can be the youngest." And actually when she said that, I thought that's kind of neat because I can probably relate to this better anyways (since) I am the youngest in my family (of origin).

> I played (the role of) the youngest daughter. I just happened to fall into that role by process of elimination. I didn't think it would be too hard to play because I'm one of the youngest in my own family anyway.

Roles were also familiar if they were congruous with the student's present self-concept.

> Right from the beginning I was role-playing my father. I learned in my family about how important logic and rationality, and being really, really cognitive are. My dad is in a lot ways that way. And that's a big part of who I am now.

A role was familiar and congruous with a student's self-concept if the student attempted to deal with the discomfort he/she felt in the role-playing situation by utilizing his/her typical coping mechanism in a role.

> The role that I played of the fronted false self reminds me of a time when I did that with my wife. It went through that, "Don't come too close!" She didn't run away scared and then we developed a relationship.

> I played a safe role. I was very quiet. I didn't give out too much information. From past experience, that's the way I alway felt safe. I had control of the situation because they couldn't figure out what I was thinking. So it's a coping mechanism, I think.

The degree to which a student was familiar with his/her role had certain consequences for his/her later experience during the role-playing exercise. Some of those students who assumed roles which were unfamiliar to them experienced discomfort, a lack of enjoyment, and a sense of unnaturalness while playing their roles. In contrast, some of those students who adopted familiar roles were able to identify with their roles and

experienced a sense of comfort, satisfaction, naturalness, and an ability to easily enact their roles. Thus the consequences of roles taken provided part of the context for students' continuing role-playing experiences. While some students continued in the role-playing exercise with a sense of comfort, naturalness, and satisfaction, some students faced the remaining part of the exercise feeling uncomfortable, unnatural, and a lack of enjoyment.

C. Intervening Conditions

The quality of students' role-playing experiences was affected by several conditions. As was previously mentioned, the consequences of the role taken on by each student affected the quality of his/her experience during the remaining part of the exercise. Specifically, some of those students who adopted familiar roles set up for themselves a context in which they felt comfortable, natural, and satisfied. On the other hand, some of those students who assumed unfamiliar roles set up for themselves a context characterized by discomfort, unnaturalness, and disatisfaction.

Other conditions which affected what kind of a role-playing experience a student had were factors extrinsic to the student, the student's unique biography, the perceived riskiness of the role-playing situation, and how the student perceived he/she was expected to act.

1. Extrinsic Factors

Conditions outside of students' control and which affected how some of the students experienced the role-playing exercise included such factors as the context, contextual cues, and the duration of the role-playing exercise.

(a) Influence of the Context

One aspect of the role-playing context which influenced some students' experience was the role-playing therapist.

> When one of the therapists came in, she joined with the family and she was really dynamic. She

> was getting the group going with talk. And then the next therapist came in and she was really nervous. She was asking questions that were asked three times in a row. So the effect really changed the momentum of the dynamics in the room.

> The therapist was actually the gatekeeper. The therapist would ask everybody in the family for an opinion. And probably if I think about my own pattern, I'm very willing to talk about things if someone asks me about it directly. But I'm less likely to bring things up if I'm not asked about it.

Another aspect of the role-playing context which influenced some students' behavior during the role-playing exercise was the evolution of role-playing family situations which paralleled students' own past or present life situations.

> When we started doing the role play, Darrell quickly made known that he thought he was doing alright in school but his interest was really elsewhere. And I sort of listened to this and thought, "That sounds like what one of my brothers was doing when he was young. I'm going to react the way my parents reacted to him and see what happens".

> I could just let it (my role) come off the top of my head probably because of the similarity between that situation in the role play in terms of the relationship with my (role-playing) wife and the past relationship with my ex-wife. That probably made it a little bit easier because I could just replay some of the fights that we had back then.

The students themselves formed part of the context of the role-playing exercise and thus influenced one another's experiences.

I found this role-playing exercise useful. Partly it was a function of being in a small group. If it was a great big group, you're not as apt to do as much. You're going to be quiet about it.

Even though we were role-playing, some of the personal interactions that were happening between classmates as classmates were being played out through the role-playing.

When they said I better play the mother, I felt a little bit controlled. (That) could very well have had something to do with me attacking the way I did at first. Like I'm going to show you who's in control here now.

(b) Contextual Cues

In addition to the context as an extrinsic factor influencing the role-playing experiences of students, contextual cues also influenced the way some students participated in the role-playing exercise. Some cues prompted students to look more deeply into their experiences and to make sense out of them. Cues which prompted students to reflect upon their experience included their own and others' role-playing behaviors, their own feelings, comments from their peers or professor, or questions asked by the professor.

Looking at the way we had used humor to sort of lighten the tension and gloss over a lot of things made me look at how I do that in other areas of my life.

Even though she thought she was playing a role, suddenly that role became real for her and she recognized an aweful lot of aspects of her own real circumstances and personality she had embedded into her role. That got me thinking. So then is that (my role) really a reflection of what I'm really like?

I look for things that I can say there's a lot of emotion around that. There's something going on. If there was nothing around it for me, then I shouldn't have felt as emotional as I did. So I know there's really something going on with me. So that's a real cue for me.

At the end of that session, Dr. Sawatsky asked me what I had learned about this and how did it apply to me as a therapist. I remember being confused by that question because I wasn't sure what he was getting at. Then I went away and thought about it and a couple of days later, it struck me. Of course, I know exactly what he was talking about. Am I the kind of person who in a therapeutic kind of a relationship always needs to have control?

While some cues prompted students to reflect more deeply on their experiences, other cues prompted students to disengage from the role-playing situation by withdrawing or becoming more guarded in their actions. Cues which prompted students to disengage from role-playing included others' behaviors and students' own discomfort.

I saw other people getting right into it and I guess it was a clue or a reminder not to open myself up. People are getting the roles really blurred, what is role play and what is real. They were blurred in front of me so it was extra incentive to fight hard not to let the real part show completely.

Dr. Sawatsky would have this very puzzled, confused, confounded look on his face and I know he was trying to figure out what the hell was going on in terms of emotional content. And I would think, "Alright, time to back off".

If I started to feel less socially vulnerable, then I would want to become aggressive and assertive. Then all of a sudden I would start thinking about the social context and I would want to become passive

(c) Duration

Some students mentioned that the duration of the role-playing exercise affected the quality of their experiences. Some students expressed that if the role-playing exercise was too short, they did not have enough time to become comfortable enough in the situation to become genuinely involved in the exercise.

> Maybe the class was too short to get used to a simulated family. And probably if I would have felt more comfortable, I probably would have (risked playing out some of my issues in the role-playing).

Similarly, some of the students expressed that the longer the duration of the role-playing exercise, the more deeply involved they became in it.

> As time went on in the role-playing, the members just started to avoid me because I was the passive father. But I was itching to get into it. As time went on, I became more drawn into the role-playing.

2. Individual Biography

In addition to those factors extrinsic to the student which affected his/her role-playing experience, factors intrinsic and unique to each student also affected some students' experiences. Biographical characteristics of students which seemed significant were the student's desire for privacy, his/her previous drama experience, whether the student had unresolved issues in his/her life, and his/her natural tendency to reflect on his/her experiences.

(a) Desire for Privacy

Students' preferences for privacy influenced their behaviors during the role-playing exercise.

> I was trying to establish a role that didn't have too much of my personal stuff in it. I did not really want to bring a lot of that into the classroom setting.

> Being a private person, I don't like to tell people anything anyway. I guess to keep them guessing. I guess it was because it was none of their business. They don't have to know. And I was very conscious when I was role-playing knowing that they don't have to know anything. And I'll just give them the minimum without revealing too much. Just the obvious.

(b) Drama Experience

One perception among those students who mentioned their drama experience as a factor which influenced how they played their roles was that their lack of drama experience constrained the number of choices they had for how they were capable of playing their roles.

> I'm not naturally an actress. Like I don't have training in that and I've never done drama or anything. So I think that (a role that feels natural) is just easier to play because it's more intuitive.

> I think what helped becoming a withdrawn character was that feeling uncomfortable being in front of people and trying to act in the first place was a natural cue for me to withdraw. Because I've never been in drama or anything like that. So to act was a bit nerve-wracking for me.

In contrast with those students who cited their lack of drama experience as a factor in limiting their choice of role-playing actions, one student with previous drama experience explained how his experience also limited his repertoire of role-playing behaviors.

> The part that confounds the information here slightly is that I've done a lot of acting and a lot of training in acting through the university here and a lot of work. And so I don't know if that changes things because in acting, you bring yourself into the role certainly. That's why with the father I started there and started to get into it.

For some students, their previous or lack of drama experience seems to have influenced how they experienced the role-playing exercise by influencing their expectations of what would occur during the role-playing experience. One student who lacked previous drama experience was significantly impacted by the role-playing experience when she experienced unanticipated outcomes of the role-playing exercise.

> I was amazed at how quickly (my real self emerged). I mean I really was. I've never done anything like that before, so that was quite a learning itself. I thought, oh, I'll role-play. I could act. It wasn't quite what I thought it would be.

In contrast, another student with previous drama experience and who had developed preconceptions of what to expect from the role-playing experience was impacted by the role-playing exercise in a way which was in harmony with his expectations.

> It only takes you three minutes, sometimes thirty seconds to go from acting to being your real self, I think. And I know that (because) different places that I've worked, I've done lot of role-playing. For the first three minutes, I played the role. But after that, I was no longer acting. I quickly, subtly slipped into my real self.

(c) Sense of Resolution

Another factor intrinsic to students which affected some of the students' role-playing experiences was the extent to which personal issues within students' lives had been resolved. Personal issues encompassed an array of personal conflictual issues including unresolved familial issues and situations in which some students had been suppressing parts of themselves in their real lives.

> I chose to play the role of the father mostly because of my own sort of trying to work out stuff about my father. I've done a lot of work dealing with issues about my family but one of the things that I know that has sort of remained unresolved is some of the stuff with my father.

> I think I did what I had to do in my role in sort of making it known that I was the rebellious adolescent. There is a part of me that is still rebellious but I guess there really isn't the opportunity to reveal it. I don't really have a social network where people know me really well so I'm not really too sure if I should reveal myself. Being in a counselling program, too, you're expected to be really professional and conservative.

> I can't really honestly say that (the role play) triggered anything. Mind you, I've done a lot of work working throughout my past. When I decided to go into doing therapy, I also made a decision to work on myself. And I consistently do that. And so I don't have big issues that don't feel resolved for me. I feel like I've worked through a lot of things. I don't know if that has anything to do with the fact that the role-play didn't trigger anything really significant for me.

Other students experienced a diminished sense of resolution in their lives if they were in the process of trying to incorporate new and unfamiliar behaviors as a part of their self-concept, if they had unanswered questions which they were in the process of trying to answer, or if they had hypotheses which they wanted to prove.

> I've been working on it over the last probably three or four years, thinking is it okay for men to be vulnerable. Is it okay for men to be gentle, affectionate, and supportive. And the answer is coming back yes, it is okay. It's hard to do because I have that natural tendency to go in the other direction and to be suspicious and distant. But it can be done and I'm gradually working on it.

> I was more concerned with watching the therapist work and seeing how I was feeling based on what the therapist was doing (in order to find out) what would be possibly going on in this (client's) mind. I've found (that type of client) hard to understand because I'm so much the other way.

> I think basically what I was wanting to learn was whether and to what degree people perceived the sorts of interactions that went on in my family as healthy. I think they (my parents) were out of line.

(d) Tendency to Reflect

Students' role-playing experiences were affected by their tendency to reflect on their experiences. Whether a student recognized the relevancy and meaningfulness of his/her experience often depended on whether he/she took time to reflect on his/her experience.

> What I found is that after the role-playing, I had more time to think about what had been going on in the room and its impact on me. The

> (role-playing) process was very insidious. It's there if you want to look at it but you don't have to look at what goes on for you.

> Then I left the class and I was doing something else and so I didn't think about it or put it in my memory. I never thought about it after the class was over.

3. Perceived Riskiness

Another factor which affected how some students enacted their roles was the degree of risk students associated with enacting their roles in certain ways. As previously mentioned, during the process of choosing roles, some students' choices of roles were influenced by their assessments of the degree of risk engendered in playing certain roles. Similarly, during the process of actually playing roles, some students assessed the degree of risk engendered in enacting their roles in certain ways which in turn affected how they played their roles.

As in the process of choosing roles, students' assessments of risk focussed on the potential of being negatively judged by their peers and on the potential of hurting their classmates' feelings.

> My awareness of when to stop was mostly built on the sense that I didn't want to look like an ass. It would have been easy for me to continue down that road and then look like I shouldn't be a counsellor. I didn't have a sense that it would be safe to play a role like that in the classroom and for everyone else to realize that I was (only) role-playing.

> I don't think I would want to get into a role where I was really angry and ranting and raving around because I see roles as coming from within and I guess I wouldn't want to expose myself like that. I wasn't comfortable with these people.

> I think that there's lines that need to be drawn somewhere between what's appropriate to deal with in front of a class and what's not. I mean if you walk out of a class and you're completely wrecked and you're not finished with what you're dealing with, your fellow students could be in an awkward position if they felt any kind of responsibility to help see you through it.

Above and beyond how students assessed the risk during the process of choosing roles, during the process of enacting their roles, some students included in their risk assessments how their academic evaluations might be negatively affected by how they played their roles.

> I would not have allowed myself to work out some of my own issues in the classroom (role-playing) situation because it's an academic place where I get evaluated. So unless there was no evaluation, there's no way in hell that I have done that.

> In a classroom where you're being marked, I don't work out things for myself that are unresolved using the role-playing. Not with the professor sitting in the room.

4. Perceived Expectations

The quality of some students' role-playing experiences was affected by how they perceived they were expected to participate in the exercise.

(a) Perception of Course Goals

Some students perceived that they were expected to participate in the role-playing exercise in a way which met what they perceived to be the goals of the Family Counselling course.

> I wanted to really hear where she (my role-playing daughter) was coming from. I didn't know what was going on for her. Sometimes I wanted to say more but I didn't because we were there to learn, I guess, and people were getting practise being a therapist. And so there was a time to talk and a time to be quiet.

> I didn't really want to do this family thing because it put me in a vulnerable position. But I had to do it, so I did it.

Although the majority of students who spoke about their responsibility to participate in the role-playing exercise expressed that they did not have a choice except to role-play, one student expressed a different view.

> If I felt like things were getting too close (to home), it was my responsibility to say so. And in fact, if that situation had gone much further, I would have said this is going too far. I felt free to be able to stop. My sense is that that would have been respected.

D. The Role-playing Experience

A description of the role-playing experience involves a description of several elements which comprised the experiences of the students. Although every student's experience was, to an extent, unique in that each student's experience was characterized by differing combinations and degrees of these elements, several themes emerged from the combined experiences of all the students.

1. Emergence of Self

One element of the role-playing experience was the emergence of students' real selves. While students enacted their roles, some students began to enact roles which represented genuine aspects of themselves.

> When I was in my gut, then I knew I was no longer role-playing. Then I was living myself and living out part of who I really am and want to be.

> I thought I played the role out as I really am personally and as I think other people perceive me. I suppose in essence, I was kind of playing out my life.

> I didn't know how else to be but be who I am in there.

One aspect of self which emerged for some students was the emergence of an unresolved conflictual issue, typically familial or other relationship issues.

> If we were looking for something I was working out in my personal life in the role-play situation, you could find several aspects of it that fit. And several of them ran across my mind the day that we chose our roles.

Those students who had been suppressing parts of themselves in their real lives experienced in the role play the emergence of those parts of themselves that they had been suppressing.

> I had a lot of anger towards my (role-playing) mother which was interesting because I normally don't experience anger towards my real mother

except this last trip I took with her. I kept putting it off (expressing my anger to her). That's a touchy subject because my dad died and I still protect her a lot.

I was being a part of myself that I can't be anymore. I got to be selfish and self-centered. It would be nice to do more of it (in my real life). I was able to do things that I can't normally do but that are still parts of me.

Students did not always deliberately decide to play out personal issues. Rather, sometimes issues inadvertently emerged.

It absolutely blew me away how I was replicating the roles of my parents. Even though I was playing their opposites, I still ended up bringing up the same themes. I didn't mean to do that.

The day that we (role-played), I was kind of upset. My despair came out in my character. Like the mood in the room was really, really heavy people thought. I didn't intentionally say, "Well, I'm going to work this all out here". But that is what happened.

Enacting roles which represented genuine aspects of students was related to how real students perceived the role plays to be. Those students who brought out genuine aspects of themselves in the role plays tended to experience the role plays as more real than those students who did not play out roles which represented their real selves.

A variety of factors were associated with whether genuine aspects of students' personal lives emerged. The degree of comfort students felt while they role-played either facilitated or hindered the emergence of genuine parts of themselves during the role-playing exercise. Those students who felt comfortable in the role-playing situation were more likely than students who felt discomfort to reveal genuine aspects of themselves during the role plays.

> I might have played out some of my issues in the role-playing if I felt more comfortable.

> I can be angry. Like I can be angry at home. Or I can be angry with my husband or with the children. But I think I'm not comfortable enough in the (classroom) environment to be really angry.

Extrinsic factors also influenced whether genuine aspects of students emerged during the role plays. For example, some students explained how the duration of the role-playing exercise was related to the emergence of their real selves in the role play.

> I might have taken the risk of playing out some of my own issues. But maybe the class was too short to get used to a simulated family. Maybe over time I would have preferred just to express who I was.

> (Playing my role) was difficult for me because it was almost like the opposite role that I took on in my family of origin. In my family (of origin), I was the mouthy kid. If I could have carried on with my role for more role-playing sessions, I probably would have become more vocal. I can't imagine not becoming more verbal.

Another extrinsic factor which affected the emergence of genuine aspects of students was whether parallel scenarios between the role-playing situation and students' real lives evolved. Genuine parts of students were more likely to emerge if the role-playing scenario seemed to replicate situations in their own past or present lives.

> Because Ed was very belligerent and very demanding, I chose to be quiet which is something I usually do. I guess that comes from my own background having a mother that's critical and demanding. I tended to react the same way.

> I knew when the process set up that this was going to be familiar. I knew that I was going to be looking at my marriage pattern. I didn't have time to try and play a different role so what I did was play out a familiar pattern.

Besides factors extrinsic to the students, one intrinsic factor which affected whether students' real selves emerged during the role plays was whether students had personal unresolved issues in their lives. If students carried with them into the role-playing exercise personal issues that were unresolved in their own lives, it was more likely that those issues would emerge during the role plays.

> I was the (role-playing) child who was sort of doing it all. And it was just like being a mother again and sort of being in charge of things. Actually, that's a major bone of contention right now in my life. I'm tired of being so organized that other people don't have to do it.

Another factor which influenced whether genuine aspects of students emerged in the role play was the perceived riskiness of the role-playing situation. Typically, if students did not feel safe or trusting of their classmates, genuine aspects of themselves tended not to emerge in the role play.

> I spent a lot of time watching people and trying to get a feel for whether I could trust them or not. I don't open up that fast because I know how people are and I had to test it out and see what they would do with what I would say. And keep doing that until I feel safe. And then I would open up.

> When I look at myself, I'm a very emotional person. More in private anyways. If it was just my close friends, I could have played the role with emotion. But I felt like there were other people there who would judge you. So I was quite happy playing this unemotional role.

2. Immersion

Another element of the role-playing exercise was the degree to which students became immersed in the role-playing exercise. While some students very much involved themselves in playing their roles, other students tended not to become immersed in the role-playing exercise.

> I really enjoy role plays. Instead of not putting too much (energy into the role), I took what I had and put it into it. Because I really enjoyed it. I really get into it. I really got into the character.

> I was surprised at how quickly I was drawn into that anger stuff especially considering the kind of frame-work that it was within. It was a role play in the middle of a classroom full of people being evaluated for what we were doing. And I was astonished at how quickly those other people just disappeared.

> I was sometimes bored (while role-playing). It probably had more to do with sitting there and having a lot of things going through my mind. The year is very busy and I have two thousand things to do. Some of the time it was hard to sit there and to concentrate.

The degree to which a student was immersed in the role-playing exercise affected whether the student reflected on his/her experience while he/she played his/her role. Typically, students who were quite immersed while they enacted their roles did not simultaneously analyze their role-playing experiences.

> I think I recognized that was happening as it was happening but it wasn't always in the same time dimension. What would happen is that you might engage and then you'd sit back and say, "Whoa, what's happening here?" So for me, it would be sort of that kind of in-out.

> While I was in my role, I did not realize that. It just occurred to me right now. I don't think about things when I do them.

> A lot of things came out later. After I distance myself from it, then I start thinking about things that I didn't see at the time.

The degree to which a student became immersed in the role-playing exercise was associated with how real the student perceived the role-playing situation to be. Most often, the more that the student became immersed in the role-playing situation, the more he/she perceived the situation as real.

> The more I got into the role play, the more anxious I would get because it became more real.

> I probably got into it more in the here and now than I had anticipated. You do get quite caught up in what's happening and start responding to the person as your (own) daughter. There's a transference going on.

There was also an association between the degree of immersion experienced by students and whether students played out genuine aspects of themselves. Those students who became immersed in the role-playing exercise were more likely to bring aspects of their real selves into their roles compared to those students who did not become immersed in the exercise.

> Typically I'm more aggressive than assertive. The more I got drawn into the role-playing, the more I wanted to become aggressive and assertive.

A factor which affected how immersed students became in the role-playing exercise was students' comfort levels. The more comfort the student felt while role-playing, the more likely it was that he/she would become immersed in the role-playing exercise.

> I really didn't even want to talk. I just wanted to sit there. I didn't really want to participate in it. I didn't feel comfortable with the simulated families to tell you the truth. The role that I chose was quite undemanding because as a child, I didn't have to be responsible or to say anything. I didn't have to make up a story line or the issues.
>
> I didn't ever want to cut (my role) off. I was quite comfortable in that role.

Extrinsic factors also affected the degree to which students became immersed in the role-playing exercise. For example, the duration of the exercise affected how immersed students became in the role-playing exercise.

> As time went on, I became more drawn into the role-playing.
>
> If it had gone on longer, I'm sure I would have been more immersed.
>
> With more time, I would have been more into the role.

Another extrinsic factor which affected how immersed students became in the role-playing exercise was whether similarities evolved between the role-playing scenarios and students' real lives. It was more likely that students would become more immersed in the role plays if the role plays seemed to mirror students' real-life situations.

> Steve was very much like my ex-husband. My ex-husband was away all the time. He was rarely home. And so like all of a sudden it's hitting me, "Holy Gees! This is like deja vu. I've lived this!" And I became the part.

Another factor which affected how immersed students became in the exercise was the perceived riskiness of the situation. Students who perceived the role-playing situations to be risky tended not to become as immersed in their roles compared to students who felt safe within the role-playing situation.

> I was aware of the people in the room. If there was a higher level of trust and if it was a safer environment, I'd put more personal energy into role-playing. And it's hard to do that when you don't know half of the people who are watching.

> In social situations I'm very detached. If I'm detached and play a passive role, then there is less of me exposed. It's more comfortable and you're not taking the risk as much. But if I'm not too overwhelmed with the social aspect, I really like to participate.

3. Realness

The third element of the role-playing exercise was how real the simulations seemed to the students. Some students experienced the role plays as artificial and did not experience any blurring of the boundaries between what was real and make-believe.

> I knew that it was sort of an as-if situation. And I was well aware at the time that a role was being played and I could borrow some of my own experiences from the past.

> It felt unnatural. It would be better to have my (real) family there. It just felt artificial and unnatural for me.

Whereas some students experienced the simulations as artificial, other students thought that the role plays had a quality of realness.

> I remember thinking we're going to have fun with this and joke around. But actually, when you go through it all, you do start to feel like a (real) family.

For some students, their role-playing experiences seemed real to the extent that they began blurring the boundaries between the simulation and real life.

> The lines started to merge for me. I could see Lois as the (role-playing) daughter but it was as though it went past the veneer of Lois, the pretend daughter, into Terry, (my classmate). So once the role play was over and people were out of costume so to speak, I was still concerned that Terry was okay. I didn't think that it would carry over beyond the role play. It was more real than I would have realized.

> Near the end of therapy, something broke down inside me and I kind of felt sorry for (my role-playing mother). And I remember thinking that it was weird because I felt real compassion for (my role-playing mother) like she was my real mother.

As was previously discussed, the more immersed students became in their roles, the more real their role-playing experiences seemed to become. Conversely, the more real the role-playing situation seemed to the student, the more likely it was that the student would become more immersed in the role plays. Thus, there was a reciprocal relationship between the perceived realness of the role-playing situation and the degree to which students became immersed in their roles.

> I was sort of sitting back a lot. Maybe it was hard with all the people coming in and changing roles all the time. It wasn't very realistic for me. Truly and honestly, I don't think I got as involved as I would have if it were more real to me.

There was another reciprocal relationship involving the perceived realness of the role-playing situations. Specifically, a reciprocal relationship also existed between the perceived realness of the role-playing situation and the emergence of genuine aspects of students while role-playing. As was previously discussed, as genuine aspects of students emerged in the role plays, the students perceived the role plays as more real. Conversely, the more real the role-playing situation seemed, the more likely that genuine aspects of students would emerge in the role plays.

> I might have been more myself if the role play had been more real for me. It wasn't like real therapy. If a (real) therapist would have said what the (role-playing) therapist said, I would have said that I didn't understand what he was saying. If I was paying this therapist money to see me, I would maybe have been different.

A factor which affected the degree to which students perceived the role plays as real was the degree to which role-playing situations paralleled students' real-life situations. Role-playing situations seemed more real if they seemed to mirror situations in students' real lives.

> In the role-playing, our mom was more verbal than our dad. And my mom is much more verbal than my dad. So it was a parallel situation. Maybe that's why it just drew me in so quickly and became so real.

Another factor which affected the degree to which students perceived the role plays as real was whether they experienced any emotions while role-playing. The role-playing situations seemed to become more real when students experienced genuine emotions while they role-played.

> I was sitting there feeling a little guilty.
> That made the whole thing more real for me.

> When that anger started coming out, it was just like those people (in the classroom) disappeared. It was like this was real stuff now.

4. Emotionality

Experiencing genuine emotions while role-playing, the type of emotions experienced, and the intensity of their emotions comprised another element of students' role-playing experiences.

> I had a lot of anger. I kept that inside but I could feel it in me. It surprised me how intense my feelings were.

> As we got toward the middle segment, I began to feel a sense of helplessness and a sense of frustration because I didn't seem to have any impact on (my role-playing wife). A sense of loneliness started to come out towards the end of the middle segment.

> I remember being very intellectual rather than having my emotions being stirred up. I was mostly trying to script things to say rather than experiencing feelings.

As was already mentioned, the role-playing situations seemed to become more real for students when they experienced genuine emotions while role-playing.

5. Comfort Level

Another element of students' role-playing experiences was students' comfort levels while role-playing. While playing their roles, each student's sense of comfort varied on

a continuum from discomfort to comfort. On one end of the continuum, some students experienced discomfort.

> I didn't want to play my (parent) role at all. When I played the child role, I had so much fun. But with the parent role, I had a responsibility. And I just didn't like it. So, no, I didn't look forward to playing the parent role at all.

> I wanted to say, "Well, let's cut this. I don't want to do this anymore". I felt really lost in that role not knowing what to do and I didn't feel comfortable. It didn't fit. It wasn't fun.

Some students' discomfort was experienced as a feeling of anxiousness, often performance anxiety.

> In the first (role-playing) session, I was feeling anxious because I wasn't sure about who was going to do what and how it was going to set up. And I was concerned about other people watching. So that felt uncomfortable for me.

Some of those students who felt uncomfortable while role-playing used several strategies to relieve their feelings of tension. Some found it helpful to exaggerate their roles as a way of relieving tension.

> I knew that I didn't like being mean to (my role-playing siblings). And I probably softened it by making it a little bit exaggerated or kind of stupid.

Some students used humor to cope with the tension they felt while role-playing.

> If we would have videotaped it, most of what you'd see is that everybody's laughing. I helped to create some of that and I was noticing that was an easy way to the relieve tension of what was going on in the room.

Other students dealt with their tension by switching the focus from themselves onto others.

> There were certain points where I wanted to change topics. I tried to take the attention off me so I could get a little breathing space. So therefore I put it on (my role-playing sister) or just deflected it back onto the parents.

Finally, some students coped with their discomfort by disengaging from their roles.

> I would try and back off. When I backed off, I would get really quiet. I was thinking about consciously not getting in there.

Instead of feeling a clear sense of comfort or discomfort, some students experienced ambivalent feelings.

> I had two kinds of feelings (while playing my role). One was liking the role. I mean I kind of liked it. But some uncomfortableness in it too. I felt uncomfortable telling my parents that they really weren't good parents. So I mean to say those things in the role play to my family when I've never said them in my life felt uncomfortable.

> The role plays are fun. At the same time, they're scary. I think they're attractive to

> do because they're fun. But then you don't know what you'll be bringing out in the process, so it's scary. It's like going on a rollercoaster.

At the opposite end of the continuum were students who felt mostly comfortable while role-playing.

> I felt pretty comfortable in the role. Like on a scale of one to ten, ten being the most relaxed I've ever been in my life and one being a panic attack, I think I probably felt like a seven or an eight.

> I think for the most part, I enjoyed the role that I had.

Some students' comfortableness was heightened when they experienced a sense of accomplishment during the role play.

> The most outstanding thing (in the role play) was that I was able to connect with a male in authority. And I didn't feel threatened by that.

Although the student's sense of comfort usually varied throughout the role-playing exercise depending on the circumstances, the student's overall comfort level and enjoyment while role-playing affected the degree to which that student became involved in the exercise and the degree to which he/she revealed genuine aspects of himself/herself. As was already discussed, students who for the most part felt comfortable while role-playing were more likely to become immersed in the role-playing exercise and to play out genuine aspects of themselves in their roles compared to those students who generally felt uncomfortable role-playing.

6. Naturalness

Another element of the role-playing experience was the degree to which students' participation in the role plays felt natural to them. Playing their roles seemed natural if students felt that their roles were easy to play and if enacting their roles seemed to happen automatically.

> I remember that coming out of my mouth without me exactly choosing it. I remember it coming out of my mouth without me thinking about it. That was an incident that sort of surprised me: how something like that could come out without me actually planning what I was going to say.
>
> I don't remember planning it. As soon as I opened my mouth, it just came out.

In contrast, students who felt unnatural in their roles found their roles difficult to enact and found it necessary to intellectually analyze how to play their roles.

> I was the youngest and I didn't know how to be. I was trying to figure it out in my own mind how I should act. So it wasn't like a natural thing.
>
> When the spotlight was back on me, I thought, "Oh, God! Now I've got to think again! What would she do?" It was work! It wasn't natural.

7. Reminiscence

Another element of the role-playing experience which was a part of some students' experiences was reminiscence. For some students, occurrences in the role plays brought back memories for them.

It was as if I was fifteen again. I was saying things that were very similar.

Experiencing those same feelings of withdrawing that I had (when I was a fourteen) made me more aware of what it was like back then to be withdrawing.

The conflict in the role play between the parents triggered a lot of, "Oh, I remember this".

8. Compensating

Another element common to some of the students' role-playing experiences involved those role-playing behaviors which had the effect of compensating for what the student perceived he/she lacked in his/her past or present life. To counter-balanace aspects of their lives which were missed or were still missing, students played out parts of themselves which were antithetical to their usual ways of being.

Actually it's funny because that role that I had was the way I never was. Maybe it was what I wished I would have been like. For me, to play that is almost like going back and being that type of person that I wished I could have been.

I like to have opportunities to be playful. There are so very few times when I have that opportunity. If I was to describe myself, I'm super responsible and maybe that's part of it. So it's neat to be able to have a chance to go back and do that and to play.

9. Experimenting

Another element which comprised some of the students' role-playing experiences was the experimenting which some students carried out while role-playing. Some students experimented in the role plays as a way of answering questions for themselves.

> Over the last two years, I've begun to make a conscious effort to begin to try experimenting with whether it's safe to trust men. And this role play was more of the same kind of thing: experimenting with is it safe to trust men.

Other students experimented with new behaviors in the role plays.

> I felt like I could experiment with some of the different theoretical approaches.

> The role-playing is more like the what-if. You get a chance to do your what-if's in the role play whereas it's harder if you're dealing with real people in your life.

10. Practising

During the role-playing exercise, one element characterizing some students' experiences was the practising which students did within the role plays. Some students practised behaviors which were personally important to them.

> I'm learning to speak up for myself and to engage in verbal confrontation without backing down away from it. The role plays gave me a chance to practice verbal confrontations.

Other students practised behaviors which would contribute to their professional development.

> The role plays allowed you to practice counselling skills primarily.

> What I found most valuable in the role play in terms of my professional work was when I got to role play the therapist. That was helpful to me professionally because I got to actually practice in a pretend situation how to handle the situation.

11. Orchestrating

Another element which comprised some students' experiences was the orchestrating some students carried out while role-playing. While role-playing, some students perceived that they were responsible for setting the direction of the role play by orchestrating the role play.

> Maybe I was trying to make this my clear role and trying to make it have the impact that I'd seen it have. Sometimes I was trying more than others to actually direct things.

> I don't know that I had full control but as we were creating the story, I'd want to kind of shove it in a different direction when it was being put into one area.

> I think I probably had a lot to do with developing the kind of person the (my role-playing wife) became in the role plays because I took a particular role.

12. Managing Risk

Another element of the role-playing experience which characterized some students' experiences while role-playing was risk management. Some students who perceived the role-playing situation to be risky, managed the risk by trying to avoid becoming immersed in the role play.

> As I went into the role-playing, I remember
> feeling that I was still going to stay
> detached because it was not a real family.
> This is still a classroom situation.

Other students managed the risk of potentially hurting their classmates by deliberately taking actions aimed at avoiding overstepping boundaries.

> I broke from the role play because I didn't want to
> become locked into seeing (the classmate who
> played my husband) negatively. I didn't want to
> be locked into the anger that I was feeling.

13. Reflection

The last element which characterized students' role-playing experiences was the particular aspects of the role-playing experience students chose to focus on. Some students' focus was on themselves as they role-played.

> I played the role out as I thought I would but
> I tried to distance myself and evaluate myself
> in the role. I remember thinking that that was
> a pretty aggressive, confrontive thing for me
> to do (in my role) which didn't surprise me.
> But I stepped back and tried to see myself in
> that situation. I wondered how comfortable I
> was with what I saw myself doing.

> I did a lot of maintaining sort of a piece of me that was aware of the role play and aware of all the issue that I was bringing into it. It was like playing the piano. Rather than listening to the music and getting caught in the music, I was very aware of playing the notes.

Other students chose not to analyze themselves and their experiences as they were role-playing.

> I wondered whether to go into my own process or to keep on going with the bigger process in the room. Usually what I did was go back into the bigger process (in the room). It's one way of avoiding looking at what's going on for me.

> The role plays are not something I'd think about. If I hadn't been asked about my experience, I probably would not have thought twice about it.

While some students chose to focus on themselves as they role-played, other students chose to focus on the academic aspects of the role-playing exercise.

> I realized that it was a class and not counselling. I think I really made that distinction clear. It was useful in the sense of seeing how the different interventions worked, how you question, and how you'd interview using a particular approach. Even though I intellectualized, you can still see how the interventions are used.

> Sometimes I probably would have said more if we had lots of time but we were there to learn. I mean it's a class where we're learning. I was letting everybody have an equal opportunity to learn.

E. The Impact of the Role-playing Experience

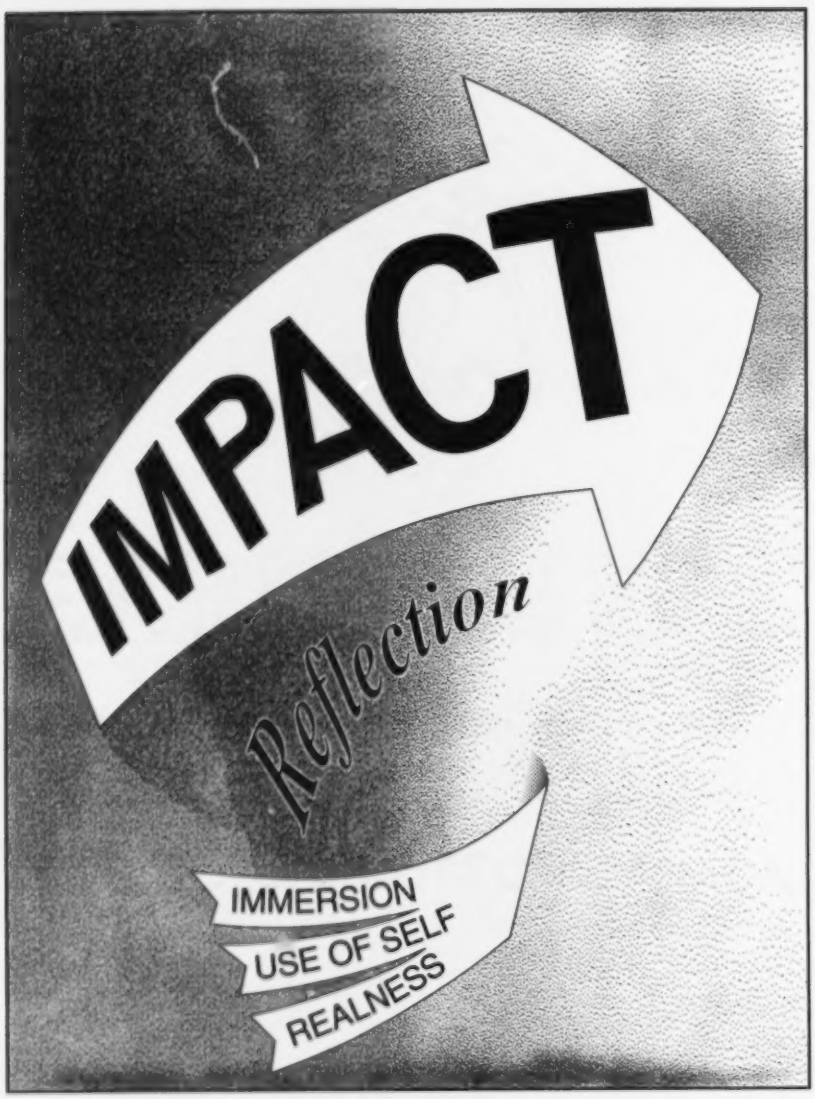
The outcome of the role-playing experience varied from a very few students who derived virtually no personal nor professional impact from the role-playing exercise to the majority of students who were personally and/or professionally impacted.

Students who enacted genuine aspects of themselves, who became immersed within the role plays, who perceived the simulations as real, and who took the time to reflect on the meaningfulness of their experiences were much more often impacted by their role-playing experiences compared to those students whose experiences did not include these four elements. Figure one depicts the relationship among these four elements which in tandem characterized those role-playing experiences which were impactful for students.

There was a close-knit relationship among three of the elements. For example, if a student perceived the role-playing situation as real, he/she would then become immersed in the role play which in turn would lead to the emergence of genuine aspects of himself/herself within the role play. Similarly, if a student first became immersed in the role play, he/she would then begin to enact a role which represented genuine aspects of himself/herself which in turn would enhance the perceived realness of the role-playing situation. Thus, enacting genuine aspects of themselves, becoming immersed within the role plays, and perceiving the simulations as real usually occurred together and interacted in such a way as to produce a kind of snowball effect whereby the presence of any one of the three elements instigated the occurrence of the other two elements.

The fourth element of taking time to reflect on the meaningfulness of the role-playing experience was another crucial element which characterized experiences which were impactful. As a result of reflecting on their experiences, students recognized how their experiences were personally relevant to themselves which in turn led to some kind of personal impact for students.

Figure 1
Interwoven Themes of Impactful Experiences



Several students seemed to recognize the importance of reflecting on their experiences and expressed their desires for more debriefing of their experiences.

> I will be taking the Advanced Family counselling course and they're saying we'll be doing that (role-playing) again. I don't have any reservations about the process at all but I've learned that I need to talk about how I feel about it rather than just letting things go. You know, processing it afterwards.

> I would have liked to have had more of a chance to actually process the role plays. I would have enjoyed doing that. And, of course, generally in the (counselling) program I'd prefer to be doing that more. In terms of processing things, we then come up with some other awarenesses. It helps me to understand myself better and to resolve things.

Of the twenty-six students interviewed, the vast majority of students reported having experienced some personal and/or professional impact from their role-playing experiences. Only three of the twenty-six students interviewed were neither personally nor professionally impacted by their role-playing experiences. Although one student's experience included the elements of enacting genuine aspects of herself, becoming immersed within the role plays, and perceiving the role plays as real, she was not personally nor professionally impacted by her experience. The only difference between this student's experience and the experiences of those students who were impacted was that she did not reflect on her experience.

The other two students who were not personally nor professionally impacted did not experience the role plays as real, only became minimally immersed within their roles, and did not carry with them into the role plays any significant personal unresolved issues.

Ironically, two students who had not reflected on and therefore had not been personally impacted by their experiences were prompted to reflect on their experiences as a result of being interviewed about their role-playing experiences and consequently were personally impacted well after the role-playing exercise was over with. Both students' role-playing experiences included becoming immersed within their roles and having unresolved personal issues in their lives.

Six students were more personally than professionally impacted by their role-playing experiences. Commonalities among these students' experiences included becoming immersed in their roles, perceiving the role plays as real, and having unresolved personal issues in their lives.

In contrast, four students were more professionally than personally impacted. Common themes in these students' role-playing experiences included a focus on academic learning, minimal immersion, and a low level of perceived realness. One of the students deliberately avoided becoming immersed within the role play while another did not carry into the role plays any significant unresolved personal issues. Two of the students perceived academic learning as the main goals of the Family Counselling course and perceived the role-playing situations to be risky.

The remaining thirteen students experienced both personal and professional impact from the role-playing experience. Commonalities among these students' experiences included students becoming immersed within their roles, students perceiving the role plays as real, students having unresolved personal issues in their lives, and students taking the time to reflect on their role-playing experiences.

1. Personal Impact

Twenty-one of the twenty-six students interviewed experienced some type of personal impact as a result of having participated in the role-playing experience. Personal impactfulness included some sort of affect on students' selves or on their personal relationships.

(a) Impact on Self

As as result of their experience while role-playing, some students increased their awareness of themselves.

> I think it was good to be triggered because it makes me aware of what is triggering me and let's me have an opportunity to look at it. What (the role play) pointed out was how easy it is to get triggered by something for me at this point in time.

> Role-playing was great. It gave me a chance to see where I'm at now in terms of my own development. I've come to know myself better.

> It made me aware of just how our family life influences us and to be aware of how you're going to take that into other relationships.

Some students became more aware of areas in their lives which needed working on or changing.

> What I did realize is that there isn't enough fun in my life.

> I think that it reminded me about some work that is still to be done and that I'm still really anxious and scared about that.

One student described how the role-playing experience was cathartic for him.

> It gave me a chance to take a painful part of me, to bring it to the forefront, to go with it, and to let it fly. So I think there was a cathartic factor within that.

Another way in which students were personally impacted was experiencing increased self-confidence.

> I think it gave me a little greater sense of confidence. I felt more reassured that I can handle verbal confrontation or that I can handle the anxiety level. It's helpful in the sense that it increases my confidence in my own judgement.

Personal impact was also experienced as a greater acceptance of oneself.

> One thing I realized was not to beat myself up about how I am but just accepting that that is part of me and finding out how I can learn from this.

> Everytime I experiment with that, it leads me a little further and I give myself permission to say it's okay to do that.

Some students were affirmed by their role-playing experiences in that what they already recognized about themselves was echoed in the role plays.

> It just sort of highlights what I've sort of known before.

> My sense was, wow, I really do do that! I was observing myself doing that.

> I think I was aware of those things and it just maybe brought them to the fore again.

(b) Affect on Relationships

The personal impact experienced by some students included some kind of impact on their personal relationships. As a result of the role-playing, some students' friendships with other students were affected.

> There were people that I became less close to.

> It made me closer to Terry.

Other relationships which were affected by students' role-playing experiences were familial relationships.

> It's very indirectly affected my relationships with my spouse and my family (of origin) as a result of that increased awareness. I don't relate the same way that I used to. I have more knowledge of myself and of other people.

> It's certainly had an impact on my relationship with my wife.

2. Professional Impact

Twenty-one students of the twenty-six interviewed experienced some sort of impact from the role-playing experience which was professionally relevant. Professional impactfulness included affects on students' counselling approaches, the confirmation of theory, and vicarious academic learning.

(a) Affect on Counselling

Some students' role-playing experiences had the effect of influencing the way that students counselled.

> It affected how I dealt with clients in that I began really watching that I wasn't trying to be too active.

> I don't think that the role-playing itself had much of an impact directly on how I do counselling. It has had an impact indirectly in that as I change and begin to understand myself better, I then have a slightly different perspective on myself as a therapist and on how I interact with clients.

> I got a better understanding of how to do this or that in the therapy session. I'm sure I used some of that with my counselling.

For some students, their role-playing experiences helped them to further develop their counselling skills.

> It really brought home the importance of self-monitering. I really realize the importance of self-monitering so you are aware of if the clients are going to suck you into a role.

> It makes me more sensitive to that issue and I can address that with clients if I suspect that it's an issue for the clients.

For other students, instead of helping them to further develop their counselling approach, the role-playing experience confirmed the strengths and weaknesses of how students already approached counselling.

> It reinforced for me the fact that it's okay to rely primarily on the person's positives than the negatives. I sometimes worry that maybe I should be bringing out a few more negatives. It's okay to continue approaching it the way that I have been.

> What came out for me as a counsellor concerned dealing with conflict. And I've known for a long, long time that I've had this (difficulty).

Many of those students who were professionally impacted by the role-playing experience gained empathy for clients as a result of playing the roles of clients in therapy.

> When you're in counselling yourself, you get an idea of what it's like to be the counsellee.

> It's almost like being able to get under someone's skin and see what it's like to be that person.

(b) Confirmation of Theory

Some students were professionally impacted by their role-playing experiences in that they were able to experientially confirm and reinforce what they had already been learning from reading and lectures.

> I understand things much better on an emotional level. You can read it but that's just intellectual. But now that I've experienced it through role-playing, I really understand.

> In textbooks, it was said that some (clients) are there because they have to be and they don't like it. Experiencing it myself made it a much more real issue than just something to remember to ask the client about.

(c) Vicarious Learning

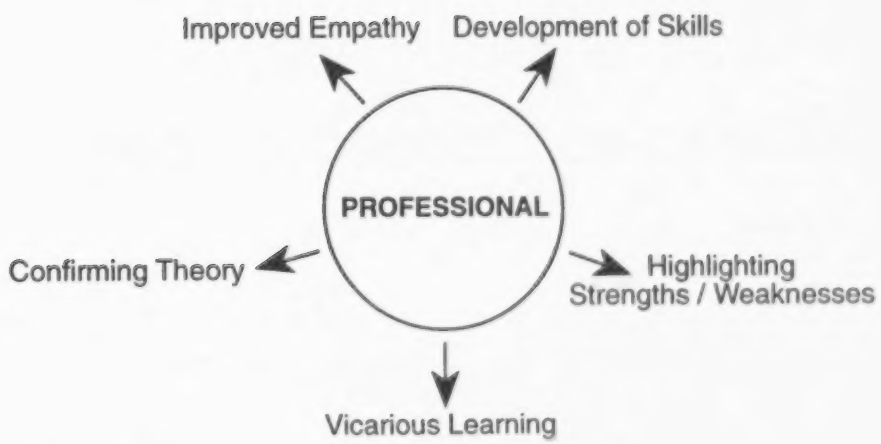
Finally, some students were able to academically learn merely by watching others role play.

> I learned an aweful lot by watching other groups. I found listening to the therapist more helpful than my own role as a therapist.

It's good to see some family dynamics and to see the teacher intervening and handling some of these dynamics that were going on and being able to name them as they're happening.

I don't think I learned as much from being in the families as I did from watching other families.

Figure 2
Impact from the Experience



Chapter Four

Discussion and Literature Review

In this chapter, I discuss the results of my study in relation to the existing literature.

A. The Selection of Roles

Students' reasons for choosing certain roles is partially consistent with Weingarten's (1979) findings concerning the primary strategies for choosing roles. Specifically, findings agree with Weingarten's findings that some students choose certain roles as a way of achieving novelty while some are assigned their roles by other students.

However, this study's findings depart from the findings of Weingarten in that this study delineated several other factors not mentioned by Weingarten which influenced the selection of roles. For example, this study also found that students chose roles as a way of creating certain impressions of themselves, to gain enjoyment or knowledge; and to avoid "risky" roles.

A factor which influenced what roles students adopted was students' desire to gain knowledge for themselves, a finding which is consistent with Sigal and Levin's (1976) observation that trainees often use the simulation exercise as an opportunity to present problems they are encountering in their clinical work.

B. Intervening Conditions

A factor which affected both the quality of students' role-playing experiences and the selection of roles was the risk students associated with enacting roles in certain ways and choosing certain roles. The perception of risk was a limiting factor in that some students managed the risk by choosing or enacting roles which allowed them to avoid becoming immersed in the role plays or to avoid expressing genuine aspects of themselves, factors which in turn were associated with role-playing experiences which were not impactful.

Oxenham (1982) also discusses learner's resistance. Oxenham explains that not all adult learners accept simulations readily. Rather, some students may fear having their dignity being injured which may inhibit them from giving themselves enthusiastically to a simulation. Findings from this study similarly indicate that students perceived as risky those roles or ways of enacting roles which set up the possibility of being negatively judged by their peers.

Brickman's (1980) discussion provides insight into why those students who perceived the role-playing situation to be too risky tended not to express genuine aspects of themselves in the role plays. Brickman explains that if the stakes are too high in a game, players must be so concerned with the outcome that they can no longer allow their behavior in the game to reflect their moods, feelings, or personalities.

This study's finding that perceived risk is a limiting factor supports Bowen's (1987) idea that nonevaluative and noninterpretive feedback which does not arouse defensiveness is one of the most essential elements in making experiential exercises effective. Similarly, Simon (1983) purports that an essential element that must be provided in an experiential exercise is a safe environment which has reduced penalties for failure, which encourages risk-taking, and which perhaps endorses a policy of not grading.

Another factor which affected the quality of students' role-playing experiences and their selection of roles was the other students in the classroom who formed part of the context of the role-playing exercise and who consequently influenced one another's decisions and experiences. A paper by Weingarten (1979) describing a course in family theory that utilizes experiential teaching techniques echoes this study's findings in that Weingarten found that the process by which students chose and developed their roles was affected by previously formed impressions of classmates.

C. The Role-playing Experience

A theme characterizing the role-playing experience was the degree of emotional reactions students experienced while role-playing. That the experience of genuine, sometimes intense emotions often constituted part of impactful role-playing experiences supports the ideas of Bowen (1987) whose personal experience has shown him that learning seems to have a greater impact when the experience is accompanied by an optimal level of emotional arousal, a level which is somewhat higher than is experienced in the normally neutral environment of the traditional classroom.

Results also support Simon's (1983) contention that most people are able to attend longer, think harder about issues, and receive deeper impressions that last longer if information is presented in a context of emotion. Fulmer (1983) also found the increased emotional intensity of simulations to be one advantage of using simulation exercises.

van Ments (1989) provides a possible explanation for why the role-playing experience became such an emotional experience for some students. van Ments explains that the close similarity between the way in which a role play is used in education and training and the way in which it is used in therapeutic situations can lead to emotional escalation.

Another theme characterizing the role-playing experience was the degree to which students became immersed in the role plays. Results indicate that some students who were quite immersed while they were enacting their roles did not simultaneously analyze their role-playing experiences. Findings support van Ments' (1989) proposition that role-playing and analysis are incompatible behaviors in that role-playing requires total immersion while analysis requires a deliberate stepping back. The incompatibility of role-playing and simultaneous analysis points to the importance of debriefing the exercise once it is over with.

Another component of students' role-playing experiences was how real the simulations seemed to the students. Results indicate that the role-playing situations seemed to become more real when students experienced genuine emotions while they role-played. Findings fit with Brickman's (1980) model.

Brickman's model explains that a person will find situations real when there is a good deal of emotion in the situation and if other people react appropriately to that person's behavior. For example, Brickman found that participants in a power game reported that the game was real and that power was real for them when they both felt that they had expressed their feelings and that others had responded. Brickman stresses that the power game demonstrates that emotions and other people's reactions are only associated with the attribution of realness, and that they are not the causes of realness.

This study's finding that some students experienced the role plays as very real, sometimes to the point of blurring the boundaries between what was real and what was fiction contradicts Prusok and Felker's (1972) proposition that role-playing presents an artificial situation and thus limits the opportunity for the communication of genuine feelings.

On the contrary, participants in this study often experienced genuine emotions during the role plays and perceived the role plays as having a quality of realness. Sigel and Levin (1976) as quoted in Rich and Sampson (1990) similarly suggest that roles may become so realistic that participants may lose themselves in the identity of the role.

Findings from this study indicate that some students used the role plays to experiment with new behaviors or to set up experiments as a way of answering questions for themselves. Findings are relevant to the idea expressed in Oxenham's (1982) paper that one aim of simulations is for students to test or predict consequences of different scenarios. Findings are also consistent with Bardill's (1976) paper which discusses how learning results from the experimenting role-players are able to carry out while enacting the roles of family therapists.

D. Impact From the Experience

Results of this study reveal that at least eighty-eight percent of those counsellors-in-training interviewed about their role-playing experiences reported having been impacted either personally and/or professionally by their experiences which lends credence to the efficacy of experiential learning. The success of this experiential exercise supports MeGarry's (1977) conclusion that research indicates that simulations are potentially very powerful instructional vehicles.

Findings are also consistent with Weingarten's (1979) findings that the use of simulated families as a means of teaching counsellors-in-training about family dynamics and therapy was a very impactful experience for students. A questionnaire sent out by Weingarten several months after the completion of the family counselling course asked students to rank-order the teaching devices in order of their usefulness. Results of the questionnaire indicated that participation in the simulated families was ranked by students as the most useful followed by readings and class discussions.

Impactful role-playing experiences were characterized by students who enacted genuine aspects of themselves in their roles and who perceived the role plays as possessing a quality of realness. Furthermore, those students who enacted genuine aspects of themselves in their roles tended to perceive the role plays as more real compared to those students who did not express genuine aspects of themselves in their roles. Findings support van Ment's (1989) observation that if role-players are themselves, the simulation will become real to the participants. Similarly, findings support Prusok and Felker's (1972) findings that students who related real concerns in a therapist-client role-playing situation produced a more intense interpersonal encounter and one that provided a more meaningful experience.

Findings also provide support for van Ment's contention that if maximum realism is the goal of the role-playing exercise, then students should be encouraged to play roles near to their own real life positions.

Findings are inconsistent with Sigal and Levin's (1976) and Schwebel's (1953) contention that a hazard of role-playing is that a member is sometimes no longer playing a role but is being himself, revealing personal conflicts. Rather, findings from this study indicate that those students who revealed genuine aspects of themselves in their roles were more often beneficially impacted by their role-playing experiences compared to students who did not enact genuine aspect of themselves.

Another characteristic of impactful role-playing experiences was that they were perceived by students as possessing a quality of realness. This finding supports Rich and Sampson's (1990) finding that when exercises were introduced which increased participants' feelings of reality during simulations, simulations became close enough to

reality to be powerful learning tools. Bardill's (1976) observation is also that experiences within role plays become real for students.

Weingarten's (1979) findings may help to explain why some students experienced the role plays as real. Weingarten found that students brought their own unique family histories to the simulated families so that the line between in-role and out-of-role identities became inevitably blurred.

Impactful experiences were also characterized by students who took the time to reflect on the meaning of their experiences. Debriefing the role-playing experience seems crucial to the success of the exercise in light of findings from this study which indicate that it is necessary for students to reflect on their role-playing experiences to recognize the personal and/or professional significance of their experiences.

The importance of debriefing is also underlined by Warrick, Hunsaker, Cook, and Altman (1979) and Simon (1983) who contend that students will miss many important lessons if the teacher does not provide adequate time and assistance in "processing out" the material at the end of the exercises. Similarly, Weil and McGill (1989) stress the importance of reflection when they discuss how experience alone is not enough to count as experiential learning but that the experiencer has to consciously realize the value of the experience.

Duhl and Kantor's conceptualization of how students most effectively learn which is outlined in Duhl's (1983) book may help to explain the significance of debriefing in creating role-playing experiences which are impactful. Specifically, Duhl and Kantor's premise is that counsellors-in-training learn most effectively when they learn "from the inside out"; that is, when they are involved in learning exercises which evoke personal, idiosyncratic images, beliefs, metaphors, and constructs which in turn become the basis for understanding theoretical constructs. Duhl and Kantor describe debriefing as a process by which trainees move from being "inside" the experience to being "outside" it. Learning takes place when trainees reflect on the activity or process, thus becoming bystanders to the experience. Talking with others about one's experience and the information gained from it facilitates the learning process.

Results of this study indicate that some students were professionally impacted by their role-playing experiences in that they were able to confirm the strengths and weaknesses of their counselling approaches. Results are consistent with Fulmer's (1983) observation that simulating families can be used to affirm one's skills.

One type of professional impact described by some students as having derived from the role-playing experience was the improvement in students' abilities to empathize with their clients as a result of having played the roles of clients in therapy. An empirical study by Barak, Engle, Katzir, and Fisher (1987) similarly found that a simulation exercise which involved trying to understand other role-playing clients as well as role-playing clients led to improved empathetic skills. Findings from this study support the

ideas of Barak et al (1987); Raasoch and Laqueur (1979); van Ments (1989); Oxenham (1982); and Schwebel (1953) who cite as an advantage or objective of simulation exercises the development of empathy after having been in the patient's role.

Another type of professional impact resulting from the role-playing exercise was the confirmation and reinforcement of concepts and theories which students had been learning about through readings and lectures. Schwebel (1953) also cites as an advantage of using role-playing as a method in counsellor training the ability to concretize theory. Findings are also in line with van Ments' (1989) comments that to read or to hear is not the same as experiencing and that it is often only by actual experience that understanding and change comes about. Oxenham (1982) also cites as an aim of a simulation exercise the reinforcement of learning.

Findings from this study indicate that some students were professionally impacted in that they were able to vicariously learn in a group setting. Findings provide support for van Ments' (1989) and Bardill's (1976) ideas that the dynamics of a group enable its members to learn from one another. Findings also lend credence to Dennison and Kirk's (1990) contention that students have much to learn from one another.

Besides the professional impact which resulted from the role-playing experience, many students described being personally affected in that their self-awareness increased. Findings are relevant to Prusok and Felker's (1972) contention that an emphasis on developing self-awareness might provide a more adequate base for beginning counsellors. Findings are also relevant to Danish (1971) who suggests that a training model for counsellor education include an initial focus on trainees' own feelings and reactions to clients in order to increase their self-awareness. Once trainees are more aware of their interpersonal feelings and reactions, Danish proposes that the focus change to a more problem-solving, client-oriented approach.

Thus, findings lend credence to the efficacy of the role-playing exercise for meeting the goal of increasing students' self-awareness, a goal of simulations which is cited by Fulmer (1983); Warrick et al (1979); and Weil and McGill (1989).

Another way in which some students were personally impacted by their role-playing experiences was to experience a cathartic effect from playing their roles. Findings are consistent with van Ments' (1989) contention that the display of emotion can be cathartic.

Some students indicated that they were personally impacted by their role-playing experiences in that their relationships with their friends and/or families were affected. Findings from this study support Weingarten's (1979) findings that sixty-two percent of respondents to a questionnaire who had previously participated in a family counselling course which utilized a simulation exercise expressed that the family counselling course caused them to feel and/or act differently in their own families.

Chapter Five

Conclusions and Recommendations

A. Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of counsellors-in-training who participated in a role-playing exercise as a way of discovering how the experiential learning exercise may have contributed to the personal and/or professional development of counsellors-in-training.

The role-playing experience of the students was conceptualized as consisting of five parts beginning with how students chose their roles; the degree of familiarity with roles taken; the conditions which affected students' role-playing experiences; a thematic description of the role-playing experience; and how students were personally and/or professionally impacted by their role-playing experiences.

1. The Selection of Roles

In the selection of roles, a variety of interacting and often conflicting factors influenced students to choose roles of particular family members. Some students chose to play certain roles as a way of achieving personal goals for themselves. For example, some students chose to play roles as a way of gaining enjoyment, novelty, or knowledge for themselves. Some students chose to play roles which allowed them to avoid uncomfortable roles while other students selected roles as a way of creating a certain impression of themselves.

Another factor which influenced what roles students selected was the desire to avoid "risky" roles; that is, those roles which students perceived as having the potential of allowing themselves either to be judged by their peers or to hurt their peers' feelings.

Finally, the role which each student ultimately took on was influenced by conditions such as students' drama experience, feelings towards the other students in the classroom, students' perceived responsibility to participate in the role-playing exercise, and other students' actions of assigning roles.

2. Familiarity of Roles

Roles taken on by students varied in degree of familiarity. While some students assumed roles which felt unfamiliar to them, other students adopted roles which were familiar to them. Those roles which were congruent with either students' present or past self-concepts seemed most familiar. In contrast, roles incongruent with students' present or past self-concepts seemed unfamiliar.

The choice of role subsequently affected the outcome of some students' role-playing experiences in that some of those students who assumed unfamiliar roles tended to experience discomfort, a lack of enjoyment, and a sense of unnaturalness while role-playing. On the other hand, some of those students who adopted familiar roles seemed more able to identify with their roles and to experience comfort, satisfaction, a sense of naturalness, and an ability to easily enact their roles.

3. Intervening Conditions

The quality of students' role-playing experiences was also affected by conditions other than the degree of familiarity of roles. Conditions outside of students' control such as the role-playing context affected how some of the students experienced the role-playing exercise. For example, if the role-playing context developed in such a way as to parallel students' own past or present life situations, students were often motivated to become more engrossed in the exercise.

The role-playing context also affected students' role-playing experiences by providing cues which prompted students to either reflect more deeply on their experiences or to disengage from the role-playing situation.

The duration of the role-playing exercise was another condition outside of students' control which affected the quality of their role-playing experiences. Specifically, if the role-playing exercise was too short, some students did not have enough time to become comfortable enough in the situation to become genuinely involved in the exercise.

Along with factors extrinsic to students which affected the quality of their role-playing experiences, idiosyncratic factors intrinsic to students such as students' desire for privacy, their previous drama experience, whether students carried into the role-playing exercise unresolved personal issues, and students' tendencies to reflect on their role-playing experiences influenced the quality of role-playing experiences.

Another factor which affected the quality of students' role-playing experiences was the degree of risk students associated with enacting their roles in certain ways. Students

tended to enact their roles in ways which minimized the possibility of hurting their classmates' feelings, being negatively judged by their peers, and jeopardizing their academic evaluations. For example, some students managed the risk of role-playing by enacting their roles in ways which they perceived as meeting the goals of the Family Counselling course.

Thus, the conditions which intervened to affect the quality of students' role-playing experiences included both extrinsic and biographical factors as well as students' perceptions of the riskiness of the role-playing situation and their perceptions of course goals.

Intervening conditions were significant to the outcome of students' role-playing experiences in that those conditions which prompted students to become more engrossed in the exercise, to reflect more deeply on their experience, or to express personal unresolved issues in the role-plays tended to lead to role-playing experiences which affected students personally and/or professionally.

4. The Role-playing Experience

Generally speaking, the experience of students enacting their roles was characterized as consisting of several themes.

a) Emergence of Self

In the process of enacting their roles, students varied in their tendency to express genuine parts of themselves such as expressing unresolved conflictual familial issues or parts of themselves that they had been suppressing in their real lives. Students tended to consciously or unconsciously express genuine aspects of themselves if they felt safe and comfortable in the role-playing situation, if the role-playing scenario seemed to replicate situations in their own past or present lives, or if students carried with them into the role-playing exercise personal unresolved issues.

b) Immersion

The role-playing experience was also characterized by the degree to which students became engrossed in the role-playing exercise. The factors influencing how immersed students became in the exercise were similar to those factors which influenced the degree to which students enacted genuine aspects of themselves. Specifically, students who felt safe and comfortable in the role-playing situation or who encountered role-playing scenarios which paralleled real-life situations tended to become immersed in role-playing.

c) Realness

Another component of students' role-playing experiences was how real the simulations seemed to the students. At one extreme, some students experienced the role-plays as artificial while at the other extreme, a few students experienced a blurring of the boundaries between what was real and what was fiction. The existence of role-playing scenarios which replicated real-life situations seemed to contribute to the perceived realness of the situation. The role-playing situations also seemed to become more real when students experienced genuine emotions while they role-played.

d) Emotionality

While role-playing, the degree of affect experienced by students varied from those students who felt no emotions to those students who experienced a range of different, sometimes intense emotional reactions. The more affective the student's role-playing experience, the more real the experience became for the student.

e) Comfort Level

Students' sense of comfort while role-playing varied on a continuum from discomfort to comfort with some students experiencing ambivalent feelings. Students' sense of comfort typically fluctuated throughout the simulation exercise as the circumstances of the role-playing situation varied. Strategies used by students to deal with the tension created by the role-playing situation included exaggerating roles, using humor, switching the focus to other role-playing members, and disengaging from their roles.

Sense of comfort was significant to the outcome of the role-playing exercise in that those students who generally felt comfortable in the simulation exercise tended to allow themselves to become immersed and to express real parts of themselves in the role plays which in turn usually led to students being personally and/or professionally impacted by the role-playing experience.

f) Naturalness

Another element which characterized the role-playing experiences of students was the degree of naturalness students felt while role-playing. The most "natural" roles were those roles which students described as easy to play and which seemed to happen automatically.

g) Reminiscence

For some students, occurrences in the role plays instigated memories for them of aspects of their real lives.

h) Compensating

Some students' role-playing experiences involved enacting roles which were antithetical to their usual ways of being. Antithetical aspects of students appeared if students were acting in ways which seemed to be compensating for what the student perceived he/she lacked in his/her past or present life.

i) Experimenting

An element common to some students' role-playing experiences was the experimenting students carried out via role-playing. For example, some students experimented with new behaviors in the role plays while other students set up experiments within the role plays as a way of answering questions or proving hypotheses for themselves.

j) Practising

During the role-playing exercise, some students practised behaviors which were either personally relevant to themselves or perceived to contribute to their professional development.

k) Orchestrating

Some students perceived that during the role plays, they set the direction of the role plays by orchestrating events within the role plays.

l) Managing Risk

Some students who considered the role-playing exercise to be risky managed the perceived risk by avoiding becoming immersed in the role plays. Other students who were concerned about hurting their classmates used strategies which prevented boundaries from being violated.

m) Reflection

Another theme which characterized students' role-playing experiences was specific aspects of the role-playing experience students chose to focus on. While some students' focus while they role-played was more personal and introspective in that they focussed on their own reactions, other students were instead motivated to focus on the more academic aspects of the exercise.

5. Impact From the Experience

Approximately eighty-eight percent of those counsellors-in-training interviewed expressed that they were impacted to some degree personally and/or professionally by having participated in the role-playing exercise. Of those students whose role-playing experiences were impactful, half found the experience both personally as well as professionally impactful. Approximately twenty-three percent found the experience to be more personally than professionally impactful while the remaining fifteen percent found the experience more professionally than personally impactful.

Students described their experiences as being personally impactful if their selves or their personal relationships were affected. For example, some students described having experienced the impact of the role-playing exercise as an increased awareness of themselves, sometimes an heightened awareness of areas in their personal lives which needed working on or changing. Some students experienced the impact as an increased sense of self-confidence or acceptance of themselves while other students found themselves affirmed by their role-playing experiences. In some cases, the role-playing experience was described as having affected both students' relationships with their colleagues and real families.

The professional impact described by students as having resulted from the role-playing exercise included affects on students' counselling approaches, the confirmation of theory, and vicarious academic learning. For example, some students found the role-playing exercise helpful to confirm the strengths and weaknesses of their counselling approaches while some students found that they gained more empathy for clients as a result of having played the roles of clients in therapy. Some students found the exercise academically useful in that it experientially confirmed and reinforced concepts and theories which they had been learning about from readings and lectures. Finally, academic learning took place for some students as the result of having an opportunity to watch others role play.

The factors which repeatedly characterized the experiences of those students who were impacted in some way, particularly personally, were that students played out real aspects of themselves; they became engrossed in the role-playing exercise; and perceived the simulations as real. The factor which characterized the experiences of those students who were more professionally than personally impacted was that students focussed on academic learning during the role-playing exercise.

The experiences of the few students who expressed that they were in no way impacted by the role-playing exercise reveal other factors which appear to promote the development of impactful experiences. Specifically, those students who did not take the time to reflect on their experiences tended to miss how their experiences were personally relevant which in turn seemed to preclude impactful experiences.

The other factor which appears to be significant to the creation of impactful outcomes is whether the student took into the role-playing situation any significant personal unresolved issues. Generally, those students who had unresolved issues in their lives at the time of role-playing experienced the role-playing experience as personally impactful, especially if the role-playing situation paralleled their real-life situations.

B. Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this study are as follows:

1. The participants in this study were all students from the University of Alberta and may not be representative of all counsellors-in-training from other settings and institutions. Findings from this study therefore may not be entirely generalizable to other educational settings or populations.

2. In the interviewing process, participants were first interviewed about the details of their experiences and lastly questioned about how their role-playing experiences may have personally and/or professionally impacted them. The sequence of questionning may have confounded some of the results in that some students were personally impacted by their eperiences well after the role-playing exercise was over with as the result of having been interviewed. Being interviewed seems to have doubled as a sort of debriefing for some students.

3. During the analysis of the data, I did not discriminate between the role-playing experiences of those students who were enrolled in the Introductory Family Counselling course and those students who were enrolled in the Advanced course. My treatment of participants as a homogeneous group may have confounded the findings since the role-playing experiences of the students enrolled in the Advanced course may have differed from the experiences of the students enrolled in the Introductory course. For example, students of the Advanced course may have developed certain expectations about he role-playing exercise and a sense of comfort different from those students who had only participated in the Introductory course which in turn may have led to different kinds of role-playing experiences for the two groups.

4. Findings reveal that a limiting factor was the risk some students perceived of having their academic evaluations affected by how they enacted their roles. Findings from other similar studies which focus on the role-playing experiences of students from other educational settings which do not assign grades for courses may therefore differ from the findings of this study.

5. Both the Introductory and Advanced Family Counselling courses were taught by the same instructor. Findings from this study may have differed if the courses had been taught by a different instructor.

C. Recommendations for Counsellor Training

The following recommendations are intended for trainers and educators of counsellors-in-training who want to make the most effective use of simulation exercises as an experiential approach to promoting the personal and professional development of counsellors-in-training:

1. Students who felt comfortable and safe while role-playing were more often personally and/or professionally impacted by their role-playing experiences compared to those students who perceived the role-playing situation to be risky. Thus, it appears that the creation of a safe atmosphere in which simulations take place is crucial to the successful outcome of simulation exercises. A safe environment may be created before implementing simulation exercises by using tactics which enhance group cohesion and trust. Furthermore, students' anxiety may be reduced if trainers clearly explicate how students' academic evaluations may or may not be affected by how they participate in the simulation exercise.

2. The strategies used by some students to cope with the anxiety they felt in the role-playing situation included exaggerating roles, using humor, switching the focus to other role-players, and disengaging from role-playing. Trainers may be able to use these behaviors to moniter students' anxiety levels. Trainers who observe any of these behaviors, expecially a high frequency of them, may want to take more time to develop a safe atmosphere before continuing with the simulation exercise.

3. Students who experienced a sense of comfort and realness while role-playing were more often personally and/or professionally impacted by their experiences compared to those students who felt uncomfortable and unnatural while playing their roles. Students who selected familiar rather than unfamiliar roles were those students who tended to achieve a sense of comfort and realness while role-playing. It may therefore be beneficial for trainers to encourage those students who may feel anxious about role-playing to choose roles close to their own life positions as a way of fostering comfort and realness and ultimately impactful role-playing experiences. However, those students who already feel comfortable role-playing should not be discouraged from playing unfamiliar roles since some students who played out antithetical

parts of themselves also derived personal and/or professional benefit from the role-playing exercise.

4. Those students who had impactful experiences were those students who took the time to reflect on the meaningfulness of their experiences. Casual comments made and questions asked by other students and the professor both while role plays were in and out of session often instigated students to reflect more deeply on their experiences; therefore it may be of benefit for trainers to give voice to their observations and to encourage students to also verbally contribute their ideas and observations. Furthermore, indepth debriefing at the conclusion of the role plays may help students to not only increase their self-awareness but to help them learn "from the inside out" by helping students recognize how their own personal experiences can help them to understand theoretical concepts.

5. Most students' perceptions were that they had no choice except to role play. For those students whose personal preference was to retain their privacy, the perception that they had no choice but to role play may have been detrimental, especially if those students avoided becoming immersed in the exercise as a way of retaining their privacy. Those students who did not become immersed in the role plays tended not to be impacted by their experiences. It may be helpful for trainers to offer students a choice of whether to role play as a way of reducing the defensive behavior of some students which may interfere with an impactful outcome.

6. A factor which influenced how students participated in the role-playing exercise and which sometimes limited the outcomes of their experiences was students' perceptions of course goals. If students perceived the goals of the class as being only academic, they tended to act in ways in the exercise which led to more academic than personal learning. Trainers may find it helpful to make the goals of the course explicitly clear to students, especially if one of the goals is personal learning so that students feel more free to act in ways which promote personal learning.

7. Emotional reactions were often a component of impactful experiences and may have helped to contribute to students' learning. Trainers may therefore find it beneficial to normalize the occurrence of emotional reactions while role-playing and to encourage the acceptance of emotional experiences. For example, before beginning a role-playing exercise, trainers may prepare students by suggesting that it is not at all unusual for emotional experiences to occur during role plays and that these experiences are not only normal but often beneficial in promoting the personal and/or professional learning of students.

D. Future Research

Some suggestions for future research are as follows:

1. Although this study stopped at the point of theme analysis, Strauss and Corbin (1990) suggest that the development of theory or a basic psycho-social process is the ultimate aim of qualitative research. Future research may therefore involve the elaboration of themes already delineated in this study and the connections among the themes to develop a theory of the process by which students personally and/or professioanlly learn from simulation exercises.

2. In contrast to this study which considered the participants as a homogeneous group, future research may involve the treatment of the participants as more of a heterogenous group by separating out the data more. For example, separating out the data according to gender may yield a new perspective if it is found that females in counselling programs tend to already have more empathetic skills than males in the same counselling programs. Similarly, separating out the data according to enrollment in either an Introductory or Advanced Family Counselling course may further illuminate how previous role-playing experiences may affect the quality of students' later role-playing experiences.

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Appendix A: Interview Guide

Please focus on your experience with role-playing families in the family counselling course.

1. What roles have you played?
2. How did you choose to play this (these) particular roles rather than other roles?

Think of a particular time when you role-played a member of a family and experienced behaviors/feelings which seemed familiar to you. (eg. familiar from your family of origin or from your current family).

Please describe a particular incident(s) when you did something or when something happened that made you realize that you were enacting a similar or diametrically opposed role in relation to your role within your family of origin or current family.

1. What were you feeling?
2. What were you thinking?
3. How did you choose to play out this role or stop the enactment?
4. How was the incident(s) helpful to you as a counsellor?
5. How did this affect your relationship with others? eg. friends, family, clients

Appendix B: Consent Form

The purpose of the research undertaken is to discover your experience with role-playing simulated families in the family counselling course and to determine how role-playing may be a useful tool for furthering the personal and professional development of counsellors-in-training.

Sharing your experiences may further your own personal learning and will help to advance the theory and practice of counsellor development as it relates to learning and developing both personally and professionally as a counsellor.

The information gathered will be incorporated into a thesis written for a Master's degree in Counselling Psychology.

Your participation in this research project is voluntary and will involve approximately one hour of your time in which you will be asked to reflect upon your experiences with role-playing simulated families during a personal interview with the researcher. The interview will be videotaped in order to allow the researcher to note nonverbal communication for a more clear understanding of what is being expressed as well as to allow the transcription of the interview. All data will be held in strict confidence with complete anonymity guaranteed. The tape will not be viewed by any other person besides the interviewer. The videotape will be kept until transcription is complete, at which time it will be erased. In absolutely no way is your participation in this research project related to your evaluation in any course. At any time during the course of the research project, you may choose to withdraw any part of or all of the information you provide during the interview and request that the videotape be erased.

In order to make sure that I am operating with your understanding and consent, I would appreciate your cooperating in signing this form.

_____

Date

_____

Signature